BBC

NEW LIGHT ON THE **DARK AGES**
MICHAEL WOOD ON ENGLAND AFTER THE ROMANS

HISTORY MAGAZINE

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING HISTORY MAGAZINE

July 2022 / **www.historyextra.com**

RUSSIA'S DOOMED REVOLUTION

Antony Beevor on why the uprisings of 1917 descended into disaster

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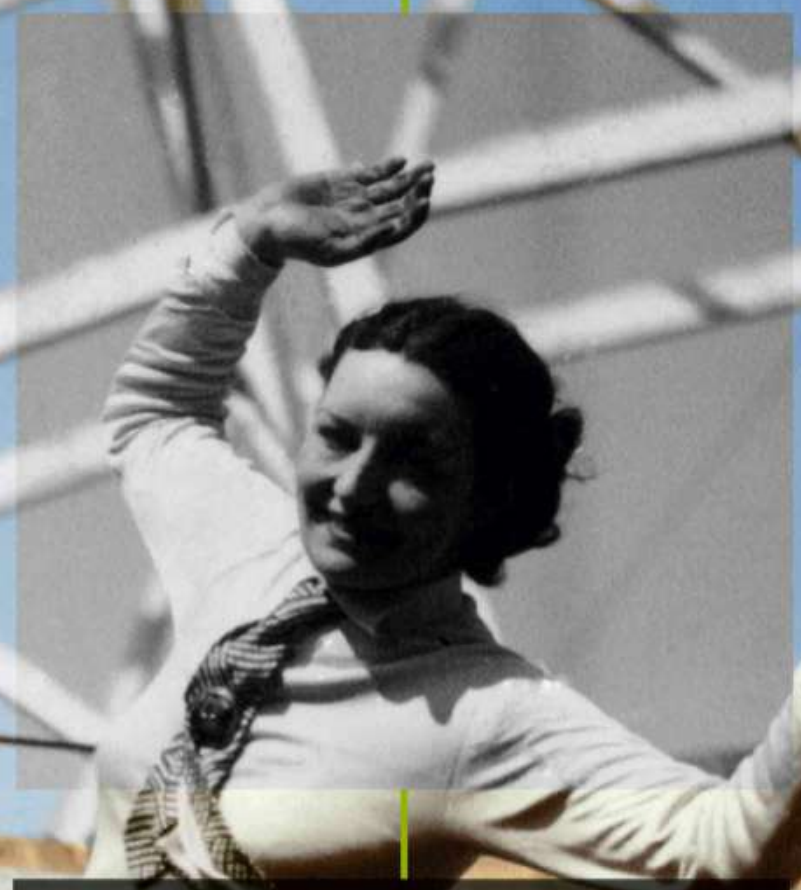
THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN SCANDAL

How WWI transformed plastic surgery

At home with the Stuarts
Explore the dynasty's grandest royal residences

The Normans' African conquest



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WELCOME

JULY 2022

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

I'm giving away my age here but **Michael Wood's *In Search of the Dark Ages*** is as old as I am – published in 1981 to coincide with his landmark BBC TV series. In the years since, it's never been out of print, and now Michael has produced an updated version that reflects all the discoveries and new thinking of the past four decades. For this month's issue he's highlighted some of the most interesting of these developments in a piece that begins on page 42.

Another of Britain's great popular historians appearing in this month's magazine is **Antony Beevor**, who is world-renowned for his narratives of Second World War battles and campaigns. For his latest book, Antony has headed back two decades to explore the history of the **1917 Russian revolutions and the civil war** that followed in their wake. I had the chance to interview him about the book recently and that forms the basis of our cover feature, on page 50. It's a story that had a profound impact on the subsequent century, and many of the areas fought over then have sadly become battlegrounds again in recent months.

Lastly, I'd like to highlight a piece that's much closer to home – right in the front of it in fact. Like me, you probably give little thought to the door that guards the entrance to your house or flat, but these objects can offer a range of insights into British society. Rachel Hurdley has been charting the **history of front doors** for a new BBC documentary, and on page 29 she shares some of her findings on these portals to the past.

Rob Attar
Editor

THREE THINGS I'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. A pioneering patient

In July's *Anniversaries* I was interested to find out that the first patient to be treated by the newly founded National Health Service in 1948 was a 13-year-old girl called Sylvia Diggory (page 14).

2. The forgotten pacifists

I hadn't realised before that Britain had three times as many conscientious objectors in the Second World War as it did in the First, as revealed by Tessa Dunlop in her book review on page 78.

3. Perilous pins

One of the fascinating details in our piece on historical dress accessories was the fact that women sometimes wielded hat pins as dangerous weapons at the turn of the 20th century (page 65).

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Lindsey Fitzharris
"A lot of disfigured soldiers during the First World War were hidden from the public, so I really wanted their stories to be told and to do them justice."
Lindsey describes the great leaps in plastic surgery during the First World War on page 70

Simon Thurley
"My latest book is the story of the Stuart dynasty through the places where its monarchs and their families lived, loved and died. A surprising number of those amazing places you can still visit today."
Simon selects seven royal residences beloved by the Stuarts on page 88

Cordula van Wyhe
"Historical dress accessories do not require expertise or prior knowledge to bring the past alive. That they were once part of everyday fashion now gives us a unique vision of history and can inspire us all to a vibrant interest in the past."
Cordula and Susan Vincent reveal the huge history of tiny fashions on page 63

Clifford Williamson
"It is now 50 years since a 'third-rate burglary' at the Watergate Building in Washington DC started a chain of events that was to be a two-year national nightmare for the USA and force the resignation of President Richard Nixon."
Clifford looks back on the scandal that exploded into an American crisis on page 20

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ON THE COVER: VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN, RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, OCTOBER 1917: ALAMY, THE SUTTON HOO HELMET IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM: GETTY IMAGES. ROGER II OF SICILY IN PALERMO: ALAMY. THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES /ALAMY/JENI NOTT/ DAMIEN MCFADDEN/CHRIS RIDLEY

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DAMIEN MCFADDEN/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

EYE-OPENER

Goddess of war

Dating from 4,500 years ago and topped with a crown resembling the head of a serpent, this striking stone statue of a goddess was discovered by a farmer tending his land in the Gaza Strip.

The 22cm-high Bronze Age carving was found by chance by Nidal Abu Eid in the south of the strip. It depicts Anat, a war goddess of the ancient Canaanite civilisation which, at its zenith, spanned what is now Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Syria. Because the area was a key trading route for a succession of ancient cultures, it has since yielded a host of archaeological treasures – a fact complicated by the political and military tensions that have characterised its more recent history.

Despite the risks that the conflict poses to heritage sites in the region, this statue, at least, looks set to be saved for the future. It's now on display at Qasr al-Basha, a historic building in the Old City of Gaza that also acts as one of the strip's few museums.

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Have a story? Please email Matt Elton at matt.elton@immediate.co.uk

TALKING POINTS

Weaponising history

A recent opinion piece by Simon Schama on political and military misuses of history sparked a huge, and varied, Twitter response. **ANNA WHITELOCK** took stock of the debate

In May, **Simon Schama** (@simon_schama) wrote an essay in the *Financial Times*, discussing how and when history is weaponised for war. The historian argued that "bad history can kill. Those who butcher the truth may end up butchering people. Every day, the news from Ukraine says as much." He continued: "Openness to self-criticism, the mark of strong, honest history, is not – as is sometimes said by flag-waggers and drum-beaters – a sign of national self-hatred. On the contrary, it represents an optimistic patriotic faith that, in free societies, the cohesion of national community is better served by the examination of truth than by otiose flattery."

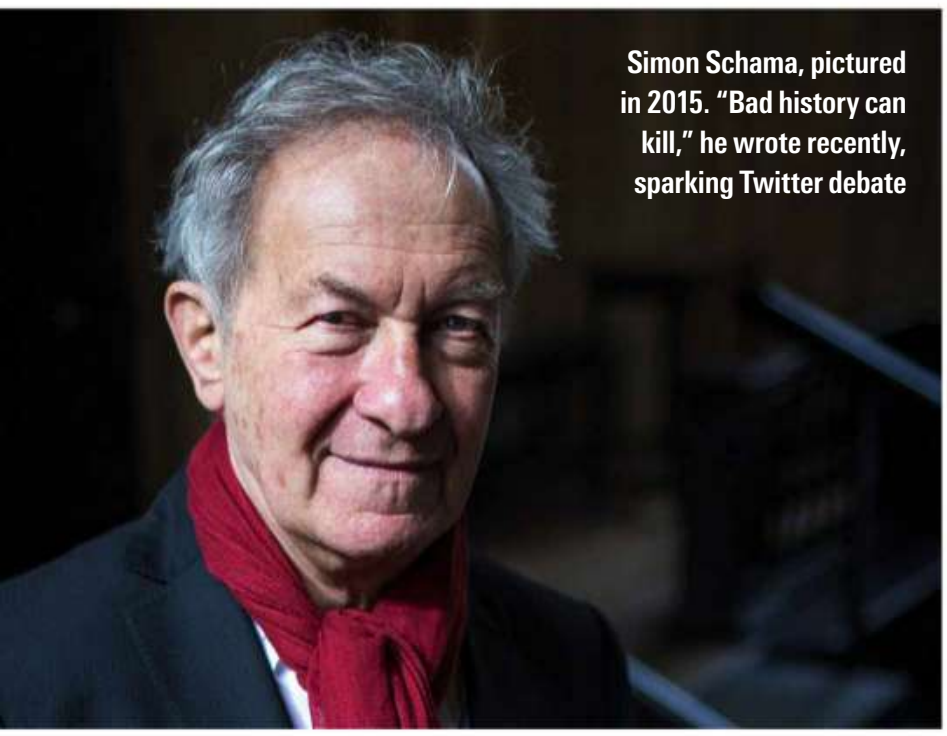
As you would expect, Schama's article prompted much discussion on Twitter. **Tom Moore** (@PaperMissiles) enthused that "Simon Schama has done us all immense service by taking the time to turn his authority and judgment, his clarity, against a world intentionally clouded by lies." **Andy Carter** (@andykerrcarter) tweeted: "Excellent analysis as ever from [Schama], not only on Putin's misuse of history but on that by the likes of [Hungary's prime minister] Orbán and [Turkish president] Erdoğan. The nuances of a complex and conflicted past cannot be reduced to black and white tales of goodies and baddies, something which our own government doesn't grasp."

There was also some critique, however. **Sam** (@0151Sam64) pointed out that the piece included "not a word about British, US bad history in the pursuit of power… Just all those nasty nations and leaders." Schama responded: "Believe me, I have plenty to say on those prize examples… space [was] limited and [I] was concentrating on bad history as driver of war… Stay tuned."

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

Debate was also sparked by Schama's concluding section on Ireland, in which he wrote: "Sinn Féin, once wedded to the perpetuation of historical grievance, may well have become the majority party in Northern Ireland's assembly… with a promise that its responsibilities are first and foremost to the social well-being of all the people." **Brian Walker** (@bwalker347) noted: "Schama's terrific article on 'bad history' and 'tedious victimhood' slams Putin on Ukraine but praises Ireland – including potentially Sinn Féin, if they really are committed to a new vision of Ireland." While praising Schama's overview, **David Rieff** (@davidrieff) thought that it featured a "far too optimistic conclusion". **Jonny** (@gawanorniron) was more condemnatory: "[Schama] ruins a good article with a ludicrous example. Sinn Féin are the absolute masters of 'bad history' and 'tedious victimhood'."

With Sinn Féin now confirmed as the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly, only time will tell if and how far Schama is an optimist or a realist.



Simon Schama, pictured in 2015. "Bad history can kill," he wrote recently, sparking Twitter debate

Anna Whitelock is professor of the history of monarchy at City, University of London

> "The nuances of a complex past cannot be reduced to tales of goodies and baddies"

A banquet shown in an 11th-century manuscript. Meat may not have been on the Anglo-Saxon menu as regularly as we've traditionally imagined

BRIDGEMAN

ARCHAEOLOGY

Anglo-Saxon kings were "mostly vegetarian"

The popular image of an Anglo-Saxon hall set for a great feast, its tables laden with meat and mead, is an evocative one. But a new study suggests that rulers in the period may instead have eaten a mainly vegetarian diet.

Experts from the University of Cambridge analysed the bones of more than 2,000 people buried in England between the fifth and eleventh centuries to discover chemical clues about what they had eaten during their lifetimes. They then researched the social status of those individuals, looking to factors such as the location of their burials and the objects included in their graves. The results indicated that the elite didn't eat more meat on a daily basis than other social groups.

The results are surprising because accounts from the period refer to high-ranking individuals consuming a large amount of meat. Yet the authors of the study suggest that such accounts may describe provisions for occasional royal feasts, rather than the kinds of meals served on a regular basis – which, for all members of society, would have primarily been based on cereal crops rather than meat.

Writing in *Anglo-Saxon England*, Sam Leggett and Tom Lambert also note that those feasts appear to have been incredibly lavish, suggesting they would have been attended by large numbers of people, including non-elite individuals. This suggests that the disparity between the diets of the elite and the rest of society was less marked than is often thought. Yet the authors also stress that more research needs to be carried out into the subject.

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

Lockdown cataloguing leads to rediscovery of tiny Bible

The coronavirus lockdowns of the past two years were not, for many people, a time of great productivity – but, for the staff of some of Britain's archives, they offered a rare chance to fully explore their collections. That's the case at Leeds Central Library, where staff rediscovered almost 3,000 previously overlooked artefacts including the tiny bible pictured below. The book, which dates from 1911 and measures only about 50mm by 30mm, accurately reproduces both the Old and New Testament in miniature. It's not known when it was first donated to the archive, but along with many of the other newly uncovered objects, it's now on display to the public.

Excavation work in the grounds of Leicester Cathedral, which has uncovered the graves of more than 100 people

Graves revealed during Leicester Cathedral restoration work

Work to build a new visitor centre at Leicester Cathedral has uncovered the burial sites of more than 100 people. The remains were discovered in the grounds not far from the cathedral's altar. This would have made it a desirable location in which to be buried, and the project team believes that hundreds more graves might be found across the coming months.

Although the building wasn't designated a cathedral until 1927, it has been one of the area's most important churches since at least the 12th century. Experts suggest that the burials may span that period, and each will be carefully analysed before being reburied within the cathedral's grounds.

As well as the site's Christian past, archaeologists also hope to discover new clues about the Roman ruins on which the cathedral and its graveyard are known to have been built. The density of buildings constructed in Leicester's city centre during later periods means that the current project, due to be completed by the autumn of 2023, offers a rare chance to explore the area's earliest history.

New podcast to chart social impact of *Call the Midwife*

Since it premiered in 2012, the BBC TV series *Call the Midwife* (pictured below) has dramatised the impact of social changes on postwar Britain through the lives of a group of midwives in London's East End. Now new research by University of Oxford postgraduate Alice Watson will explore the real stories behind the drama, thanks to a grant from the Arts and Research Council awarded to mark the BBC's centenary. The results will be shared in a podcast series, set to begin later this year.

A 2015 performance of *Cymbeline*. New questions have emerged about the play's origins

Shakespeare may have cribbed plot of *Cymbeline*

Theories have abounded for centuries about the "true" authorship of plays attributed to Shakespeare, some more plausible than others. Now new evidence suggests that the playwright may have derived the plot of the historical play *Cymbeline* from the work of fellow writer Thomas North. That's the claim of journalist Michael Blanding, who discovered notes written by North that seem to sketch a similar plot outline. North is believed to have died in the early 17th century, a few years before the play is thought to have been first performed.

Stolen Nostradamus text returned to Rome library

A 16th-century manuscript written by Nostradamus has been returned to a library in Rome after Italian police were alerted to its attempted sale at an auction in Germany. The document (pictured below) bears the title *Nostradamus M Prophecies* and a 1991 date stamp from the historical studies centre of the Barnabite Fathers of Rome, and is thought to have gone missing around 2007. The effort to return it to Italy began after a team from the nation's cultural heritage protection taskforce spotted it on the auction house's website, and then worked with German experts to identify it as a work by the French astrologer – famous for his supposed predictions of future events. H

ULAS/ ALAMY/ SHUTTERSTOCK/ITALIAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE

MICHAEL WOOD ON...
THE LONG HISTORICAL MEMORY OF IRAQI JEWS

"From the Babylonian captivity, Iraq became a centre of Jewish culture"

Victoria died last month. She was almost 100 years old, still living on her own in her house in the tranquil north London suburb of Golders Green, far from the turmoil of war and revolution that had marked her life. Victoria was an Iraqi Jew. Spanning much of the 20th century, her memory carried down to us the poignant story of the Iraqi Jewish community from the 1920s to its final passing.

It's a tale that goes back more than 2,600 years. Few, if any, communities on Earth have such a historical memory. From the Babylonian captivity to modern times, Iraq was a centre of Jewish society, learning and culture. One Talmud – that vast compendium of Jewish legal scholarship, custom and folklore – was written in Babylonia.

After many ups and downs during the Middle Ages, by 1900 the Jews were the second-largest community in Baghdad. Their population was some 50,000 strong, including famous commercial families such as the Sassoons and the Ezras, especially active in the trade with India.

Victoria was born into that very traditional world. She married Shalom when she was 16 and he was 21 – an arranged marriage, though they had admired each other from afar. Their first child was born a year later. Around that time, in 1941 – after a failed pro-Nazi uprising – the first pogrom in Baghdad took place. Jewish properties were looted, and 200 people were killed. (Victoria and her family were saved by a Muslim neighbour.)

When the modern state of Israel was founded in 1948, life for Jews became increasingly difficult in many parts of the near east and north Africa. More than 120,000 left Iraq over the next few years, stripped of everything but one tiny bag and the clothes they stood in. By 1951, most of the community had gone, having relinquished citizenship and property in a land that had been their home for two and a half millennia. Six thousand stayed on, though, among them Victoria, Shalom and their young family.

For a time, things were calm. Shalom and his Arab business partner did well. There was a new Chevrolet, picnics at the ancient site of Ctesiphon, nights sleeping under an awning on the roof in the heat of summer, family celebrations in the garden. But in 1958, the military overthrew the monarchy and things took a turn for the worse. In 1961, the family took a two-week holiday in Lebanon, and from there travelled to London, never to return. They did well – a house on the Finchley Road, a Morris Minor – though Victoria never quite adjusted, and still preferred to speak Arabic at home.

Meanwhile, in 1963 the Iraqi Republic was overthrown by a Ba'athist coup and the country spiralled into the cycles of violence that have plagued it for six decades since. By 1974, under Saddam Hussein, only 400 Jews remained. The last Jewish wedding took place in 1978; the last rabbi died in 1996; the last active synagogue closed in 2003, around the time of the invasion by the American-led coalition. During the war, efforts to track down survivors in Iraq found 34 Jews, mainly elderly and poor. By 2009, just eight Jews were left; today there are four. The story is almost over.

They have left behind 2,600 years of memories, including the Great Synagogue of Baghdad, perhaps the oldest in the world. A 2020 report taking stock of Jewish heritage sites in Iraq listed 118 synagogues, 48 schools and three cemeteries, along with nine holy places. Most famous were the lovely shrines of Ezra, on the Tigris in southern Iraq, and Ezekiel, on the Euphrates near Hilla. Both have Muslim custodians now, and the synagogue next to Ezekiel has been refurbished as a mosque.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, where some Jewish families may still live, one or two places have been restored with foreign money and private donations. Among them is the synagogue in the Christian village of Alqosh north of Mosul, with its tomb of the Old Testament prophet Nahum. In the old days it was the scene of a jolly June pilgrimage, with all communities taking part in the singing and dancing.

There's a heroism in the stories of people such as Victoria and her family – and of all those who flee conflict and persecution, forced to put best foot forward and build new lives on distant shores with the eternal optimism of the immigrant. As for the memories, they survive among the exiles – in Israel and in north London, too. As one friend said to me: "We left Iraq. But Iraq didn't leave us." H

>> Turn to page 42 to read Michael's article shedding new light on the "Dark Ages"

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his most recent book is an updated version of *In Search of the Dark Ages* (BBC, 2022). His Twitter handle is @mayavision

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ANNIVERSARIES

HELEN CARR highlights events that took place in July in history

8 JULY 1822

Percy Shelley drowns off Italy

The poet's ship goes down in a violent storm

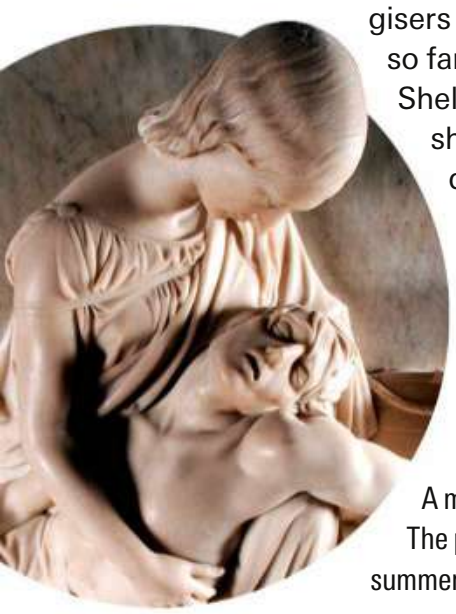
The summer of 1822 promised to be a distracting one for Percy Bysshe Shelley. The poet was sojourning in Casa Magni, a bay-front house near Lerici on Italy's Ligurian coast, where he planned to while away the days writing, seeing friends and sailing in his boat, the *Don Juan*. On the afternoon of 8 July, though, his plans went awry.

Shelley was sailing the *Don Juan* back from Livorno to Lerici with his friend Edward Williams and a boat boy, Charles Vivian, when the calm seas began to squall and a violent summer storm sprang up.

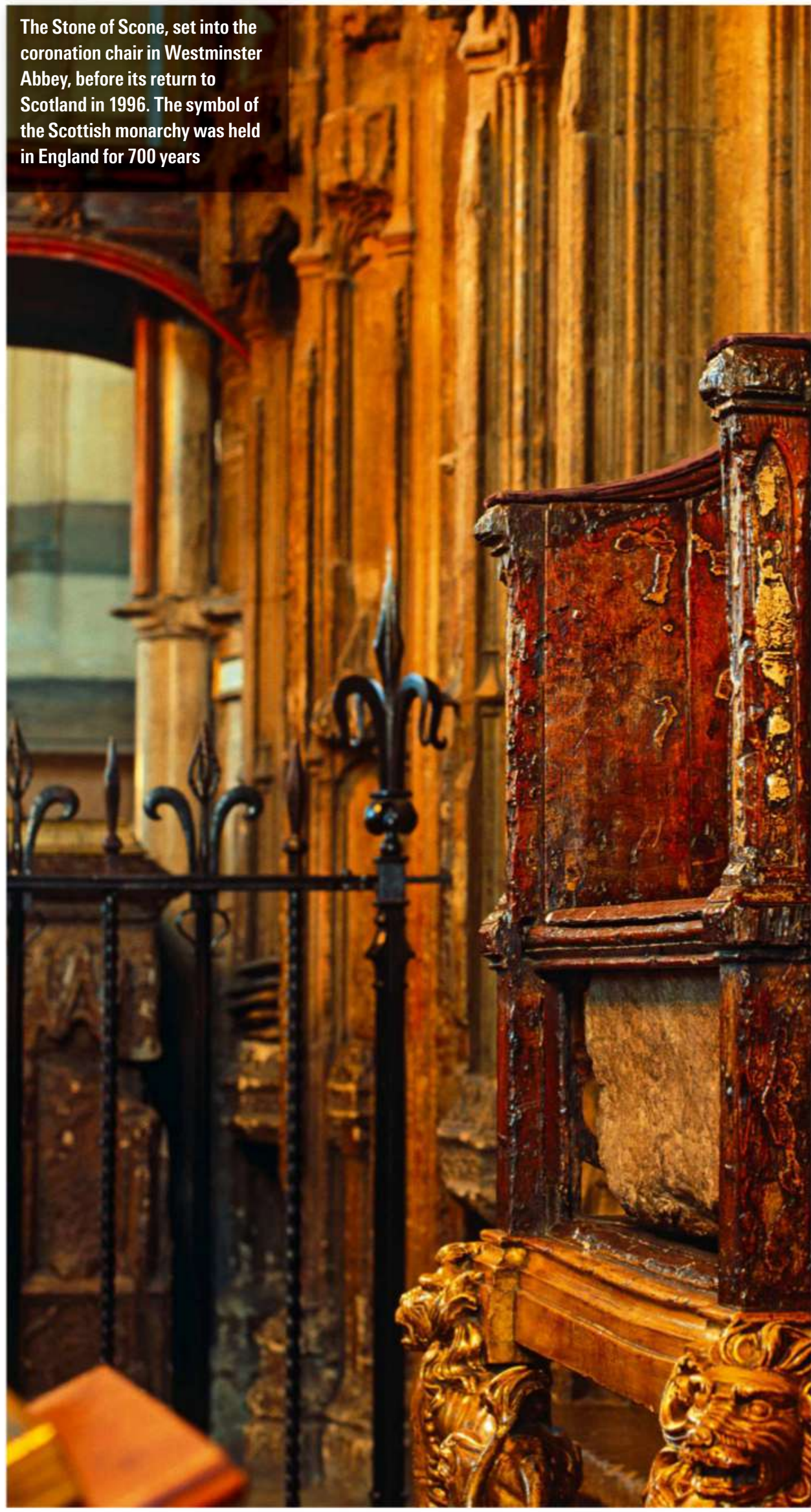
It seems that the *Don Juan* was overwhelmed by enormous waves that ripped off the boat's stern and rudder. Two of the ship's masts came loose and thundered onto the deck; the splintering vessel then sank beneath the waves.

Shelley reportedly had just enough time to cram a collection of John Keats' poems into his back pocket before he was swallowed by the turbulent sea. A poor swimmer, he stood no chance; indeed, all three men aboard the *Don Juan* were lost. Their bodies, identifiable only by their clothing, washed ashore 10 days after the storm.

Shelley's untimely and dramatic death prompted an outpouring of grief, and contributed to his posthumous fame. His eulogisers have even gone so far as to suggest that Shelley lived under the shadow of a "fatal destiny", and that he may have prophesied his own death.

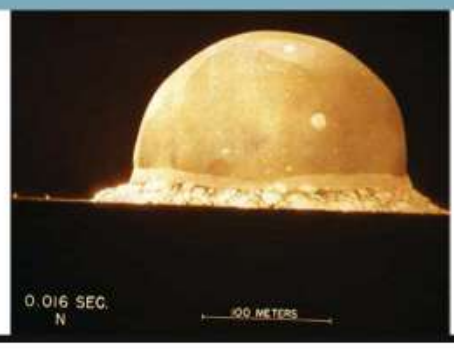


A memorial to Percy Bysshe Shelley. The poet drowned in a violent summer storm in 1822



The Stone of Scone, set into the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey, before its return to Scotland in 1996. The symbol of the Scottish monarchy was held in England for 700 years

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES



The first atomic bomb test in the New Mexico desert, 1945

16 JULY 1945

US researchers conduct the first test of a nuclear weapon in New Mexico. The following month, the US detonates atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japan surrenders, ending the Second World War.

3 JULY 1996

The government promises to return the Stone of Scone

John Major announces that the sacred artefact is going home

On a stuffy summer's day in the House of Commons, British prime minister John Major told assembled MPs that the Stone of Scone – a potent symbol of the Scottish monarchy – would be leaving English soil and returning north of the border.

"The Stone of Destiny," Major told parliament, "holds a special place in the hearts of Scots… [and] it is appropriate to return it to its historic homeland."

Future PM Tony Blair – then the Labour leader of the opposition – immediately supported Major's statement, calling the move "a welcome recognition of how we can celebrate the unity of the UK while being distinct and proud nations with differing traditions, histories and cultures".

This historic announcement had been a long time coming – 700 years, in fact. The block of sandstone – which, according to legend, had been the coronation stone for all of Scotland's kings since the early Middle Ages – was seized by England's King Edward I during the First War of Scottish Independence. Then, in 1296, it was taken to Westminster Abbey, where it was wedged within the wooden royal throne.

Prizing the stone from its setting in 1996 was a herculean task, involving a team of conservation experts who spent six agonising hours inching it out from beneath the seat. Once safely extracted, the stone travelled 400 miles up to Edinburgh Castle, accompanied by a police escort. And in November 1996 the Stone of Scone returned home, to be met with a great patriotic fanfare.

Though the stone's return was considered a just move, it did throw up questions about other cultural treasures stolen from their homes by the British during the imperial years. We are still debating these questions today.

Cromwell rides away triumphantly from the battle of Marston Moor in a 1909 painting

2 JULY 1644

Parliamentarians and their Scottish allies defeat royalist troops led by Prince Rupert of the Rhine at the battle of Marston Moor, securing their first major victory of the Civil War.

A nurse teaches an antenatal class in Bristol in 1948, provided by the National Health Service. The public uptake of the new service was overwhelming

5 JULY 1948

The NHS is launched

Free-to-access healthcare changes the lives of millions

On a July morning in 1948, health minister Aneurin Bevan strode through the corridors of Manchester's Park Hospital to meet one very special patient. Her name was Sylvia Diggory, a 13-year-old suffering from acute nephritis, a dangerous kidney condition. She was propped up on pillows in her hospital bed when Bevan arrived, and exchanged just a few hopeful words with him before he ambled away. Although their interaction was brief, she later recalled knowing there was "a great change coming about".

Diggory was the first patient to be treated by the National Health Service (NHS). The creation of this groundbreaking institution was spearheaded by Bevan, who described it as "a great and novel undertaking" – the first service to give all British citizens access to healthcare, free of charge at the point of use, from birth until death.

The journey towards this moment had been relatively short. In 1942, economist Sir William Beveridge had published a report on the state of the nation that identified disease as one of five "great evils" to be tackled in the UK. Over the following five years the government set about designing a free healthcare service, latterly under Bevan's direction. Significant compromises were made to implement his plans, including giving GPs the right to run their practices as private businesses.

The public uptake was overwhelming. Despite warnings by postwar prime minister Clement Attlee that there were "bound to be early difficulties with staff, accommodation and so on", 94 per cent of the population had registered as NHS patients by the day of the launch. On 5 July, when the service officially opened, 2,751 British hospitals – plus doctors' surgeries, dentists and opticians – were part of the NHS. Today, the service treats millions each year.

GETTY IMAGES/AKG

Our Lady of Kazan, a depiction of the Virgin Mary with Jesus, which is venerated in Russia

8 JULY 1579

Our Lady of Kazan is found in a burnt-out building

A little girl's visions reveal the location of the holy painting

In June 1579, the Russian city of Kazan was devastated by an all-consuming inferno. Soon afterwards, as citizens picked their way through ashes and debris, a message from the holy Virgin Mary was reportedly delivered to a nine-year-old girl named Matrona in a series of dreams.

According to an early 17th-century chronicle by Hermogenes (or Germogen), who had been a priest in Kazan at the time of the fire, the Virgin told the girl to find her icon inside the burned-out shell of an old house. Matrona and her mother appealed to local clerics to help with the search, but their plea was rejected by the Orthodox church. With no choice but to hunt for the icon themselves, the pair began digging through the debris of the house to which Matrona's dreams had directed them.

On 8 July 1579, Matrona discovered an icon of the Virgin Mary wrapped in a piece of old cloth and buried under a thick mound of ash. Now known as *Our Lady of Kazan*, the artefact shows the Virgin Mary holding a baby Jesus, their faces ringed by haloes.

The discovery was considered to be a miracle, for the painting – having been brought to Kazan from Constantinople in the 13th century – had been lost until then. It became a revered holy icon, rising from the ashes due to the persistence of a young girl. H

Helen Carr is a historian and writer. Her latest book is *The Red Prince* (Oneworld, 2021)

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WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

75 YEARS AGO

The first official reports of the **Roswell incident**, which spawned countless conspiracy theories

BY **DAVID CLARKE**

What was the Roswell incident?
In late June and early July 1947, "flashing lights" and "flying saucers" were reportedly seen dancing in the skies over North America. And on 7 July, William "Mac" Brazel delivered to the authorities strange metallic debris he'd found strewn across the desert near his ranch in New Mexico. The following day, the nearby Roswell Army Air Field issued a press release announcing that they had recovered a "flying disc" from near Roswell. A follow-up retracted those words, saying that the debris had been identified as a lowly weather balloon – but the original story refused to die.

What conspiracy theories resulted?
The Roswell legend resurfaced in 1980 when the authors of a book called *The Roswell Incident* interviewed former intelligence officer Major Jesse Marcel. Marcel said: "It certainly wasn't anything built by us, and it certainly wasn't a weather balloon." As the story grew, some UFOlogists claimed that the US government had recovered the wreckage of an alien craft and its alien crew, conspiring to hide the truth for decades.

How has it influenced UFO lore?
Writer Jerome Clark has described Roswell as "the most important case in UFO history". Public interest in the story has overshadowed all other such episodes, including the first sighting of "flying saucers" on 24 June 1947, when pilot Ken Arnold spotted batwing-shaped objects flying at supersonic speeds over Washington state. Roswell features in pop culture – in movies, documentaries and dramas such as *The X-Files* – and has become the focus of a UFO museum and an annual festival in the town.

What was the official explanation given by the US Air Force?
In response to pressure from Congress, in 1995 the USAF published a report that found "absolutely no evidence of any kind that a spaceship crashed near Roswell or that any alien occupants were recovered… in some secret operation". It said the debris found on Brazel's ranch was most likely from a top secret Cold War project, code-named Mogul, which involved sending balloons high into the atmosphere to monitor Soviet nuclear testing.

Why should we remember the Roswell incident today?
A CNN/Time Poll in 1997 found that two-thirds of Americans believed a spacecraft crash-landed at Roswell. It also found that 80 per cent believed that their government was hiding knowledge of the existence of extra-terrestrials. What began as a "silly season" story has become as much a part of the US cultural imagination as the assassination of President John F Kennedy. The longevity of the Roswell legend makes it impossible to forget. H

Roswell Daily Record

Gen. Ramey Empties Roswell Sauce

Lewis Pushes Advantage in New Contract

Sheriff Wilcox Takes Leading Role in Excitement Over Report 'Saucer' Found

Arrest 2,000 In Athens in Commie Plot

Send First Roswell Wire Photo from Record Office

Ramey Says Excitement Is Not Justified

U. S. Lend-Lease To Britain Looms As Needed by Fall

Local Weatherman Believes Disks to Be Human Devices

Rumania Rejects Bid to Take Part In Economic Meet

The front page of the *Roswell Daily Record* of 9 July 1947, reporting on the retrieved debris. The Roswell incident captured US imaginations

David Clarke, co-founder of the Centre for Contemporary Legend, Sheffield Hallam University

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HIDDEN HISTORIES

KAVITA PURI explores lesser-known stories from our past

"Many south Asian diasporic families don't know of their First World War links"

In 2021, when my daughter was studying the First World War in her final year of primary school, every week I asked her if she had learned about the contribution of soldiers from the British empire.

The answer was always no – though she did have two lessons on animals that died in the conflict, including thousands of camels on the fronts in the Middle East and Africa. At that point, I asked her teacher when they would be talking about the role of soldiers from the colonies. There were no plans to do so, he replied. In fact, there was just one more lesson left: an overview of the term's work. But he said he would make time to talk about it.

When my daughter came home after that class, she was eager to tell me that more than a million Indian soldiers fought in the war. Her teacher also said that in future he would include a separate lesson on the role of Indian soldiers. It was great news, of course – but I wished that I hadn't had to ask.

Our collective memory of the First World War is slowly changing, particularly since the centenary of the armistice. Crucially, whereas Dominion accounts previously focused on the stories of people from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, we now increasingly remember the contribution of Indian soldiers.

South Asian diasporic families don't always know about their own links to the First World War. The main recruiting ground was the Punjab region, to which many British south Asians have connections. In the past few months, families with Punjabi heritage have been able to search some of the archives of the Lahore Museum, thanks to a groundbreaking collaboration between the UK Punjab Heritage Association and the University of Greenwich, which is digitising thousands of files. These contain village-by-village data on the war service of recruits, as well as information on family background, rank and regiment. Diasporic Punjabis have already made connections: the Labour MP Tanmanjeet Dhesi, for instance, found files revealing that his great-grandfather had served in Iraq and was wounded in action, losing a leg.

Commemoration of the war takes many forms, including school teaching, memorial services and physical tributes. The West Midlands town of Smethwick features a statue representing the Indian soldiers who fought in the conflict, of which there were more than 1.3 million. And last year, plans were announced for a statue of Hardit Singh Malik in Southampton. The first Indian to fly as a pilot with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) – precursor to the RAF – Malik became known as the "Flying Sikh", wearing a specially designed helmet that fitted over his turban. Malik joined 28 Squadron under the Canadian major Billy Barker, and in 1916 these men and two other volunteers were surrounded by enemy planes. Malik was hit in the leg before shooting down the pilot who had shot him. Pursued by three German aircraft, his plane was hit by some 400 bullets. "It was the greatest luck," he wrote, 65 years later. "I thought I was going to be killed." Two bullets remained in his leg for the rest of his life.

Stephen Barker's *The Flying Sikh*, published in May, explores Malik's remarkable tale. The book argues that his story is, in many ways, atypical of the Indian experience of the war: though born in India, Malik enlisted in Britain while studying at the University of Oxford. Yet Barker contends that Malik remains an important symbol of both the Indian war contribution and the complex relationship between India and its colonial ruler. "Malik maintained his integrity as a proud Indian," the author told me. "He put up with discriminatory practices, and cheered on moves for home rule as well as serving in the RFC."

Stories of the contributions of Indian soldiers are now rightly gaining greater prominence in our collective memory. Hopefully no other parent will need to ask when their children will learn of the more than 1.3 million Indian men who fought in the First World War. H

Kavita Puri is a journalist, author and broadcaster. Her BBC Radio 4 series *Three Pounds in My Pocket* is currently available on BBC Sounds

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Ace pilot Hardit Singh Malik, dubbed the "Flying Sikh" (right), and these soldiers in France (left) were among the more than 1.3 million Indian men who served with British forces during the First World War

LETTERS

A contemporary engraving of John Dudley, whose home improvements are rated by reader Norma Postin

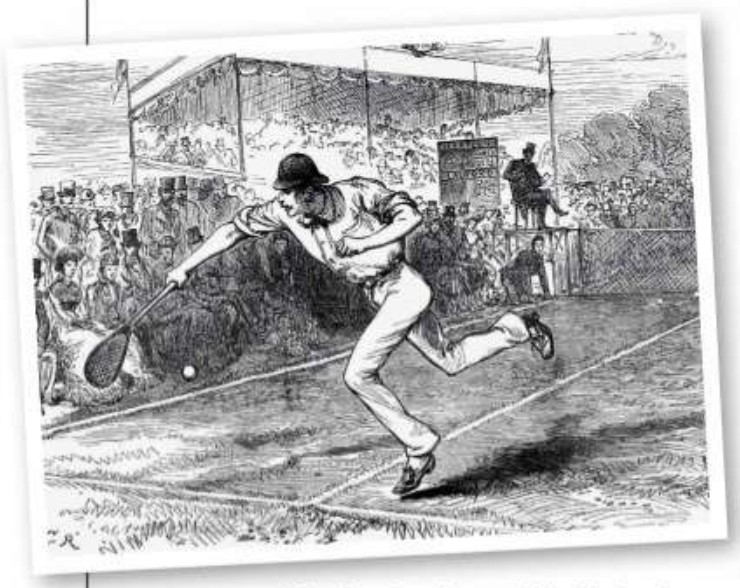
LETTER OF THE MONTH

The rallying reverend

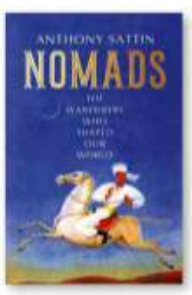
May's *Q&A* mentioned Vere St Leger Goold, the loser of the 1879 Wimbledon final, who eventually died on Devil's Island [a French penal colony]. It reminded me of the story of the man who beat him in that final: John Thorneycroft Hartley, whose "preparation" for his semi-final that year was remarkable and was described in a letter to *The Times* a few years ago.

The letter recounted how Hartley was also the vicar of Burneston in North Yorkshire from 1874 to 1919. The 1879 semi-final was played on a Monday and, according to the letter writer, Hartley "took all his church services on the Sunday. He tended a gravely ill parishioner through the night, and then rode to Thirsk station on the Monday morning to catch the train for King's Cross. A cab took him to Waterloo for the Wimbledon train, and in the cab he changed into his tennis kit." He arrived in time to play Cecil Parr and won three sets to one.

What an amazing story! I hardly think that Björn Borg – champion 100 years later – nor any of the other greats of recent years would have won in such circumstances.
Peter Murray, Edinburgh



John Hartley plays at Wimbledon in an 1880 engraving. The vicar's ability to juggle sporting prowess and religious service is praised by reader Peter Murray



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Nomads: The Wanderers Who Shaped Our World** by Anthony Sattin. You can read our review of the book on page 77

At home with the Dudleys

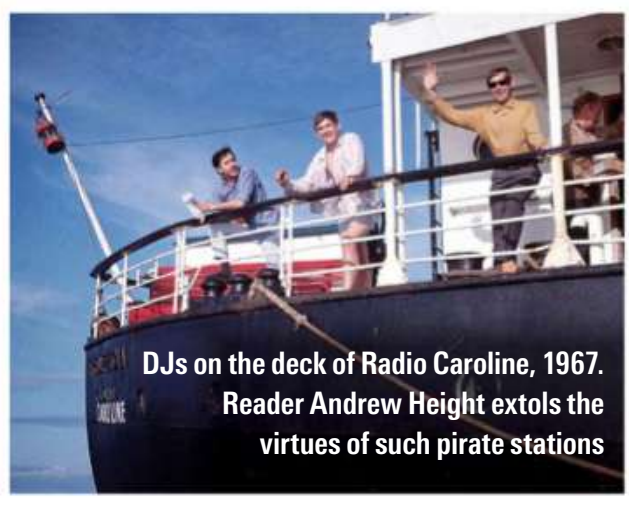
I enjoyed the account of the Dudley family and its connections with the Tudor dynasty (*The Family Behind the Tudors*, May).
I wonder how many readers realise that the original family name was Sutton? John Sutton (grandfather to Edmund Dudley) called himself Lord of Dudley in the mid-15th century after the manor, near the present Black Country town, that formed the basis of the family's wealth and power. Using money from the dissolution of the monasteries, Edmund's son, John Dudley (1504–53), modernised Dudley Castle, making it a very comfortable and luxurious place to live, with a new great hall with large windows. Unfortunately, the castle was badly damaged in the civil war, so it is not possible to see the changes that were made.
Norma Postin, Rugby

Confronting injustices

I owe a huge thank you to *BBC History Magazine* and to Kris Manjapra. I already knew, before reading the interview with Kris in the May issue, that when slavery was abolished in the British empire, slave-owners were compensated and the victims were not. I had never before realised how criminally, absurdly wrong this was. It is not comfortable to contemplate why I hadn't realised this: not comfortable, but necessary. I hope it will help me reexamine other attitudes and beliefs. To be consciously anti-racist is not enough if I am refusing to challenge my own unconscious preconceptions.
John Cosgrove, Cornwall

In praise of the pirates

I cannot agree with David Hendy's opening line in his piece in the May issue (*BBC at 100*): "At 7am on Saturday 30 September 1967, in a windowless studio in London, a pop revolution was ignited." I'd argue that the pop revolution was ignited on 28 March 1964, when Radio Caroline started broadcasting. Without Caroline, and the other pirates, the BBC would probably never even thought of having a dedicated "pop music" station. Caroline is still broadcasting, legally now, and is without doubt the best radio station on the air.
Andrew Height, Cambridgeshire



DJs on the deck of Radio Caroline, 1967. Reader Andrew Height extols the virtues of such pirate stations

Cultural cousins

James Hawes' article in the May issue (*How Britain Became a Cultural Colossus*) was interesting but, for me, verged on the jingoistic. I'm sure we'd all like to celebrate the global cultural impact of Britain, but replace the word "Britain" with the name of almost any European country and you could make a similar case: forged by conflict, talent, migration, greed, trade and a sizeable chunk of self-importance and superiority. Which nation wouldn't fit that patten? We were just a bit better at it!
Martin Eade, East Sussex

Political costs

The feature on the French Revolution in the April issue (*How Napoleon (Almost) Destroyed the French Revolution)* provided illuminating new information regarding Napoleon's rise and methods of using and holding on to power. They are remarkably similar to those used by most other tyrants in history, down to and including the present time.

I was disappointed, however, that Marisa Linton failed to mention that, following the disastrous and costly attempt to re-establish slavery on Sainte Domingue, Napoleon was forced to sell Louisiana to the United States to finance his continuing campaigns, instantly doubling the size of that country.

Another article from Prof Linton, analysing Napoleon's career of conquest from an economic standpoint, would answer many questions about how he managed to finance the establishment of his empire from the ruined state of France following the revolution.
Steve Applegate, Ohio

The first revolution?

Marisa Linton states that the French Revolution was the first of its kind in the world. That is not so: the American Revolution of 1776 precedes the 1789 French Revolution. It, too, was a revolution against a monarchy perceived as oppressive and unjust, and was also informed by a desire to set up a secular form of government. We may argue about the wisdom of either revolution, but it's important to note that the American example came a few years before that in France.
Hugh Canham, New York

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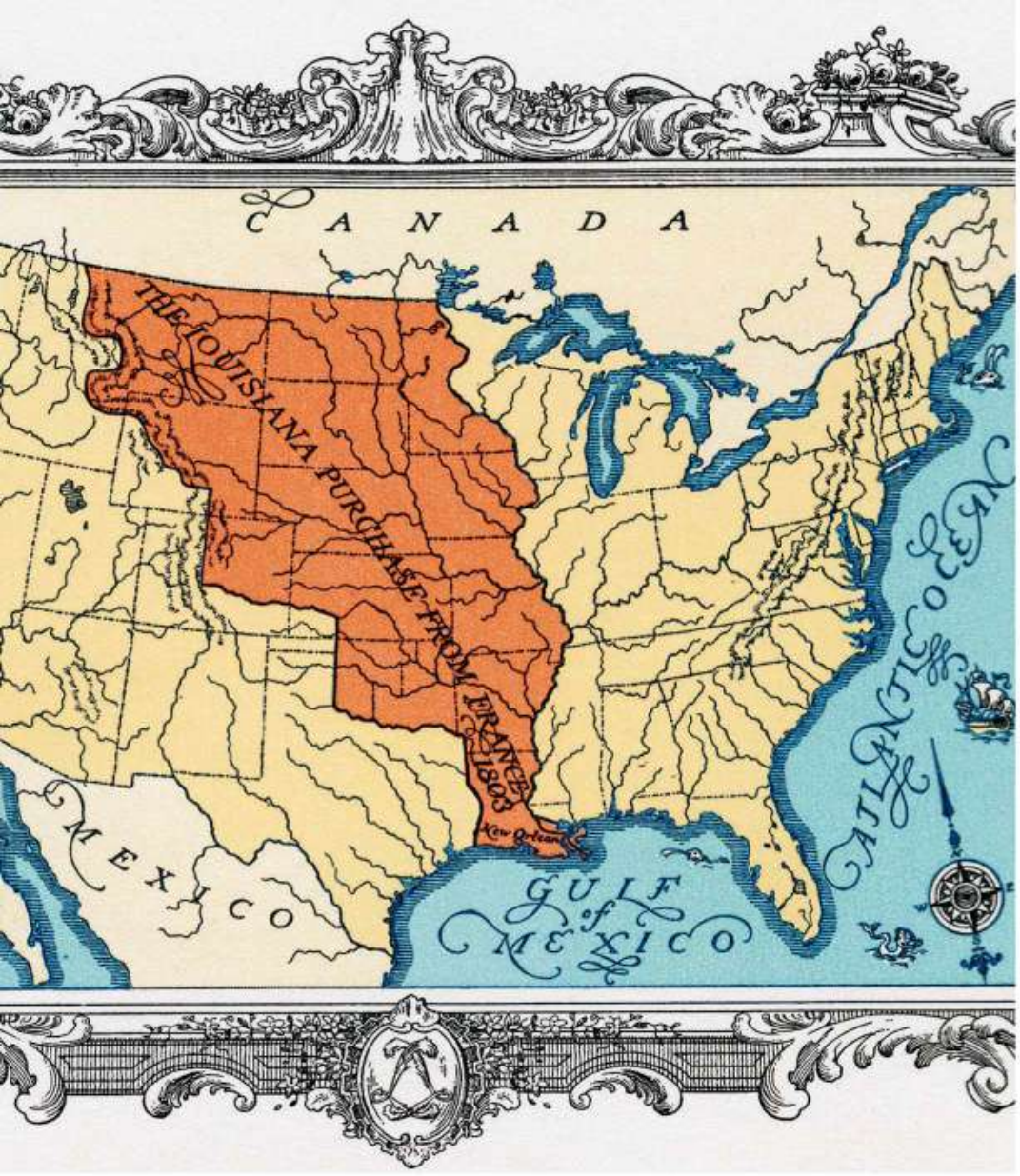

A 1926 map of the Louisiana Purchase. The acquisition of the territory from Napoleon Bonaparte's France in 1803 dramatically increased the size of the United States

Building on the past

I refer to Janet Poplett's letter in the May issue regarding small museums in the UK. I am a trustee of our own town museum, which opened in April 2016. A small group of volunteers, led by our chairman Mike Davies, sought, and eventually found and rented the upper storey of the oldest secular building in Rayleigh, Essex. We registered as a charity and with the huge support of our local MP, the town council and around 600 local sponsors and "friends of the museum", we have built a local museum dedicated to the town of Rayleigh. Within two miles, we have Anglo-Saxon remains, the site of a castle built in c1070 (from which we have some timbers), a 12th-century church and the sites of two Saxon battlefields – to name only a few of our local treasures.

Your correspondent's idea of a series on small local museums is an excellent one and, if taken forward, will unleash a large number of incredible "finds" and massive interest. We would be very happy to contribute!

David Pymer, Essex

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Page 40

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN SCANDAL

Fifty years ago, the US government was embroiled in a conspiracy that became a constitutional crisis – eventually toppling a president. **Clifford Williamson** charts the fallout from the 1972 Watergate affair

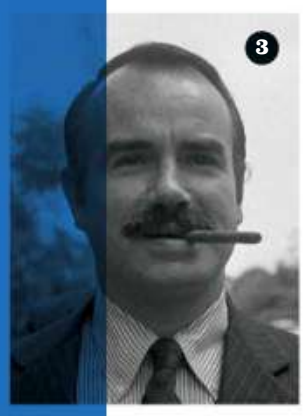
ON THE EI PODCAST

GETTY IMAGES

Man on the brink
US president Richard Nixon in 1970. His administration's involvement in a break-in at Democratic Party headquarters sparked a chain of events that led to his downfall

James McCord
Broke-in to the Watergate complex in 1972

David Young
A leader of the covert White House Plumbers



G Gordon Liddy
Supervised the break-in from a nearby hotel

HR Haldeman
Helped devise a strategy to hide the conspiracy

At 2.30am on 17 June 1972, police officers arrested five men

burgling the Democratic Party offices in Washington DC's Foggy Bottom neighbourhood. The building complex in which the offices were based had gained a reputation for crime, but these men were not – as an FBI agent later noted – "ordinary knuckleheads". They were well-dressed, with expensive cameras, eavesdropping equipment and rolls of sequentially numbered $100 bills. As it soon transpired, they didn't *seem* like typical burglars precisely because they weren't. One of the men, retired CIA agent ***James McCord*** 1, was head of security for the Committee to Re-Elect the President – known by its abbreviation CRP or, more mockingly, Creep. He worked, in other words, for Richard Nixon's campaign to secure a second term in that November's presidential election.

Nixon's press team distanced the president from what they termed a "third-rate burglary". Despite the denials, however, the incident and its unlikely protagonists set in motion a chain of events that caused a national scandal, and eventually forced Nixon to resign the presidency. This long national nightmare took its name from that soon-to-be infamous building complex: Watergate.

The roots of the crisis extended back to the previous year,

to the weekend of 12 June 1971. President Nixon's eldest daughter, Tricia, had married in a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden, which was covered by newspapers around the United States, including in a front-page story in the *New York Times* the next day. But that same edition also ran a piece that painted the White House in a much less favourable light, reviewing the findings of a study of American military involvement in Indochina between 1945 and 1968. The research suggested not only that the US had covertly widened the scope of the Vietnam War, but that the administration of Nixon's predecessor, Lyndon B Johnson, had misled both Congress and the public about this. The details of what became known as the Pentagon Papers were revealed after the report was secretly copied by a former Department of Defence analyst, Daniel Ellsberg, who had contributed to the study.

Nixon was outraged by the leaks and, furious at what he regarded as a lack of action by FBI director J Edgar Hoover, set out to discredit and prosecute Ellsberg. Key among Nixon's initiatives was the creation of a special White House unit dedicated to stopping the dissemination of secret documents. When one of its leaders, ***David Young*** 2, explained to his grandmother at Thanksgiving that he had been tasked by the president with helping stop leaks, she reportedly said: "Oh, you're a plumber!" The White House Plumbers had gained their name – which was reportedly used on a sign at the office that Young shared with ex-FBI agent ***G Gordon Liddy*** 3 and their fellow operatives, until they were reminded of the covert nature of their work.

It was this work that had first led the White House Plumbers to the Watergate Complex late in May 1972. The unit wasn't averse to employing illegal methods: earlier, in September 1971, it had broken into the offices of Ellsberg's psychiatrist in a bid to uncover information that might damage his defence. Their latest initiative, to wiretap phones in the Democratic Party's headquarters, had initially appeared successful. But they had hit a snag: although listening equipment had been deployed, it was not all functioning properly in providing the information that the White House demanded. The decision was therefore made to return to the complex to install devices in the offices of Larry O'Brien, chair of the Democratic National Committee. It was during this mission, early in the morning of 17 June, that the men were apprehended.

The task for Nixon and the other members of Creep now was threefold: to keep the scandal at bay; to silence the burglars with hush money; and to destroy any physical evidence. The president was personally most involved in the first of these objectives and, on 23 June 1972, he met with his chief of staff, ***HR Haldeman*** 4. The two men devised a strategy: enlist the CIA to tell the FBI to keep its distance, on the grounds that this was a matter of national security. Nixon was, in effect, organising a criminal conspiracy in a bid to pervert the course of justice.

Although the CIA played along, a crucial division was emerging within the FBI. When Hoover died in May 1972, Nixon loyalist L Patrick Gray had been appointed acting director – a decision that had left Gray's deputy, Mark Felt, feeling overlooked and aggrieved. Felt had befriended a young *Washington Post* journalist named Bob Woodward, and that same month provided information for the reporter's story on the recent attempted assassination of Democratic candidate George Wallace, who was left paralysed after being shot while campaigning in Maryland. Now Woodward turned to Felt for the scoop about what had happened at the Watergate complex, which Felt provided using a pseudonym that has since become famous: Deep Throat.

Along with another *Post* reporter, Carl Bernstein, Felt and Woodward went on to be instrumental in unpicking the threads of the story. And things were already starting to unravel: within hours of the Watergate arrests, FBI agents had discovered the name of Liddy's fellow Creep member E Howard Hunt in the address books of two of the burglars. All five, as well as Hunt and Liddy – who had coordinated the break-in from a nearby hotel – were indicted on 15 September 1972.

On 7 November, Nixon was announced as the winner of the presidential election, securing more than 60 per cent of the popular vote. Late that December, as Gray

The task for Richard Nixon and his team was threefold: keep the scandal at bay, silence the burglars, and destroy any physical evidence

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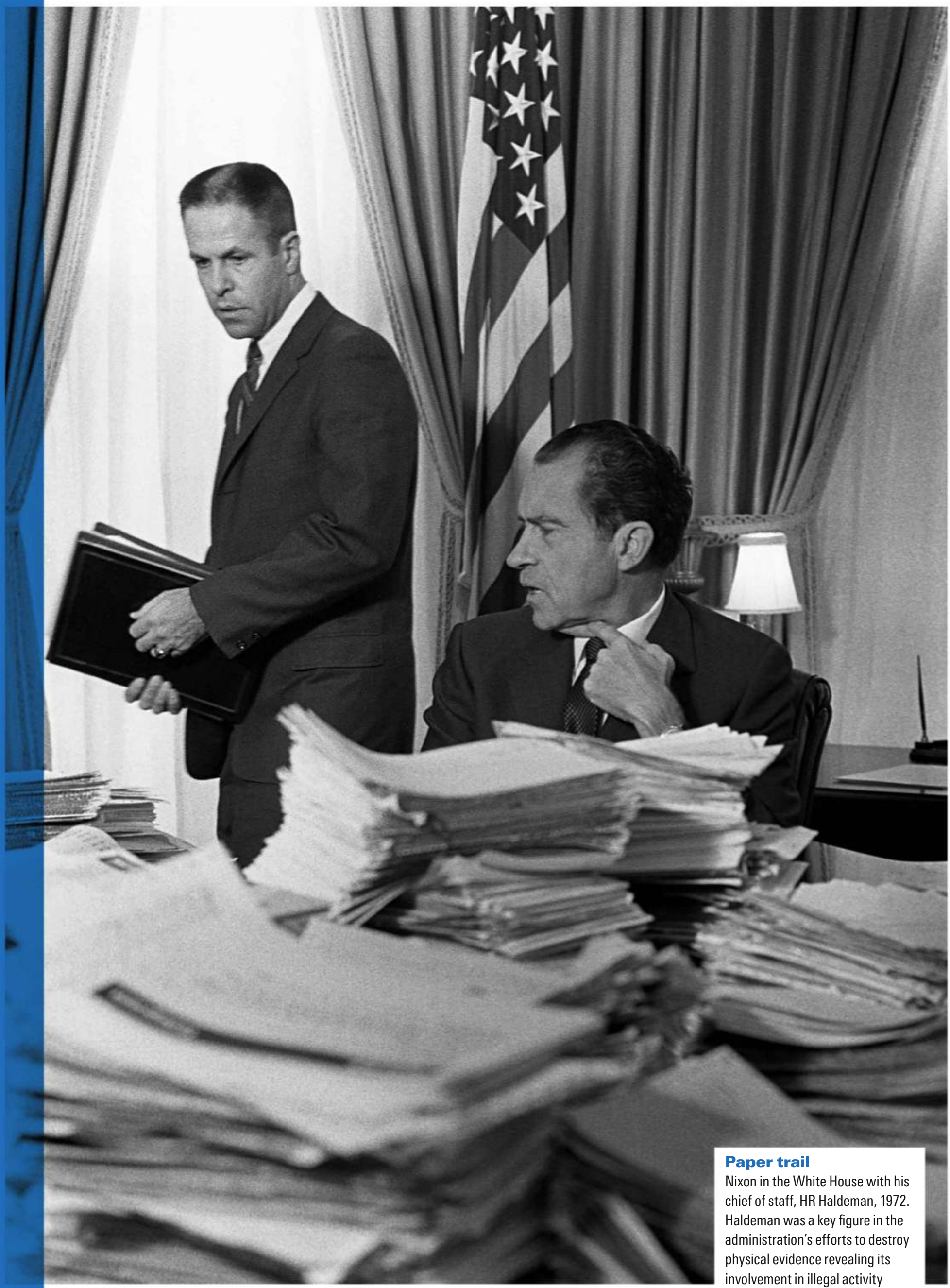
Hail to the chief
Nixon visits troops in South Vietnam, 1969. A leaked report about US military involvement in Indochina was one of the key catalysts behind the Watergate scandal



Paper trail
Nixon in the White House with his chief of staff, HR Haldeman, 1972. Haldeman was a key figure in the administration's efforts to destroy physical evidence revealing its involvement in illegal activity

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Secrets and lies
Journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in the *Washington Post* newsroom, April 1973. The two journalists were the first to report on Nixon's "dirty tricks" campaign

disposed of his Christmas wrapping paper, the acting FBI director also destroyed incriminating evidence that had been removed from a safe belonging to Hunt.

In January 1973, the burglars, Hunt and Liddy all pleaded guilty or were convicted for their role in the conspiracy. Yet Hunt, dissatisfied with the payments he was receiving to keep quiet and demanding more money in return for his silence, was proving to be a threat: after all, he knew details not only of the Watergate break-in but also of the September 1971 burglary at the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

On 21 March, Nixon's White House Counsel, ***John Dean*** 5, met with the president and Haldeman to discuss Hunt's blackmail attempt. Talk in Washington had already started to turn to impeachment: Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, had met with Carl Albert, the Speaker of the House, to discuss reports that Creep had been involved in "shaking down" businesses for campaign contributions. That could potentially constitute an impeachable offence. Against that backdrop, Dean did not disguise his concern. "I think that there's no doubt about the seriousness of the problem we've got," he warned. "We have a cancer within – close to the presidency, that's growing. It's growing daily." It would take, he suggested, a million dollars to keep Hunt and the other men quiet. Nixon responded: "We could get that."

Meanwhile, James McCord – one of the Watergate burglars – had become unhappy. Just days before he was due to be sentenced in late March, he sent a letter to the trial judge, ***John Sirica*** 6. Political pressure had been applied, he claimed, to secure the defendants' silence. He also alleged that the White House had been directly involved in the break-in and subsequent cover-up. McCord was offered immunity to testify in front of a grand jury in return for giving evidence to the recently formed Senate Watergate Committee, led by chairman Sam Ervin. In his testimony, McCord implicated Dean in the conspiracy.

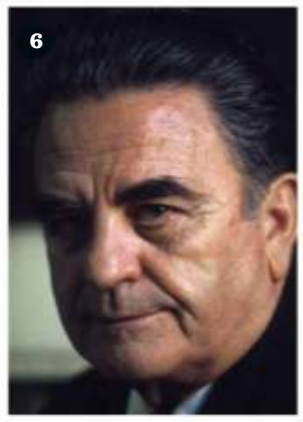
With the net closing, Dean decided to offer evidence in return for immunity, and named White House domestic affairs advisor ***John Ehrlichman*** 7 as one of the men behind the conspiracy. Dean's testimony, sharp memory and plausible demeanour made him a star performer in the live televised committee hearings, which were increasingly becoming must-watch TV. One of Dean's remarks was particularly intriguing: it felt, he suggested, as if his conversations with Nixon were being recorded. Although he didn't yet know it, his hunch was to prove correct.

Almost two years earlier, on 10 February 1971, Nixon's deputy assistant Alexander Butterfield had been called to a meeting with Haldeman's assistant. The president, Butterfield was told, wanted a voice-activated taping system installed in the White House's Oval Office and on telephones throughout the building. Such a request wasn't unheard of: his predecessor, Lyndon B Johnson, had made use of a similar system that Nixon had – somewhat ironically – removed upon taking office. This, however, was to be a more elaborate affair, known about by only a select group of people.

Now, following up on Dean's mention of covert recording, Sirica began routinely asking witnesses whether they knew of any such taping system. On 13 July 1973, Butterfield – who was well-placed to know about the president's day-to-day activities – was summoned before the committee. Questioned about Dean's hypothesis, he replied: "I was wondering if someone would ask that. There is tape in the Oval Office." A scandal initially

It felt, John Dean suggested, as if his conversations with Nixon were being recorded. Although he didn't yet know it, his hunch was to prove correct

John Dean
Became the first member of Nixon's administration to implicate the president



John Sirica
Presided over the trials of the burglars, and forced Nixon to submit his tapes

John Ehrlichman
Co-founded the Plumbers and played a key role in the cover-up

The president's men
Nixon with his national security advisor Henry Kissinger (left) and deputy advisor Alexander Haig (right), November 1972. During this period, Nixon routinely recorded his conversations in the White House

ALAMY

sparked by bugging had been turned upside down by the president of the United States bugging himself.

Among the men most interested in the existence of the tapes

was ***Archibald Cox*** 8. As the special prosecutor appointed by the Department of Justice to investigate the Watergate scandal, he had led a team collecting evidence of criminal acts for the best part of a year. Now he moved to get hold of the recordings. He was initially thwarted by Nixon, who cited "executive privilege" to prevent Cox from gaining access. Some White House advisors even encouraged the president to destroy the tapes, though others warned that doing so would be seen as an attempt to further pervert the course of justice. It could, they cautioned, be the first article in an impeachment trial. Seeking another method of forestalling Cox, Nixon instead offered edited transcripts verified by senior Democratic senator John Stennis. Eventually published in 1974 as *The White House Transcripts*, they are notable for the hundreds of times the phrase "expletive deleted" was used to cover up the president's profanity.

If the president had previously had cause to swear, the events of the summer of 1973 only added to his problems. That August, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that his vice-president, Spiro Agnew, was under investigation for bribery, tax evasion, and other corrupt practices. The paper alleged that, while serving as Baltimore County Executive and governor of Maryland, Agnew had taken kickbacks from contractors involved in public works – and that the practice had continued into his tenure as vice-president, with Agnew receiving envelopes containing as much as $10,000 in cash.

Although Nixon had added Agnew as his running mate in 1968 due, in part, to his reputation for being tough on crime, he was not entirely surprised by the news: Maryland politics had long been dogged by accusations of bribery. The potential revelations added a new twist to an already complex situation, with prosecutors calling for Nixon's impeachment now faced with the prospect of him being replaced by a vice-president *also* under investigation for a major crime. Months passed, during which Agnew continued to deny the accusations. With new details of

Some advisors encouraged Nixon to destroy the tapes – but others warned that this could be the first article in an impeachment trial

Political protest
Demonstrators in Washington DC demanding Nixon's impeachment, January 1974. A formal inquiry began in the May of that year

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both scandals emerging in the press on an almost daily basis, a constitutional crisis on a scale not seen in the US since the Civil War appeared increasingly likely. Finally, on 10 October 1973, Agnew pleaded no contest to a single charge of tax evasion. He avoided jail but was forced to resign, and was replaced by the leader of the Republican Party in the House of Representatives, Gerald Ford.

Over the coming days, the already febrile situation escalated further.

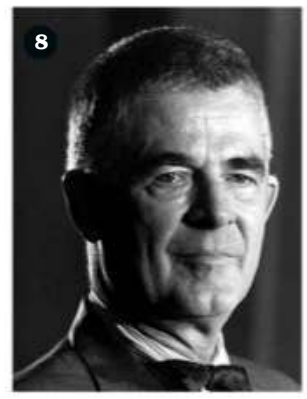
On 20 October, Nixon – desperate to rid himself of special prosecutor Archibald Cox – ordered his attorney general, Elliot Richardson, to fire him. Richardson refused, and resigned; so, too, did Richardson's deputy, William Ruckelshaus. Finally, the third in command, solicitor general Robert Bork, followed the president's orders. Nixon had got his wish – but at a cost. What became known as the Saturday Night Massacre sparked a storm of protest across the US, with thousands of people sending telegrams to Congress and the White House, many bearing two words: "impeach Nixon". Within days, the House Committee on the Judiciary had set up an inquiry process, designed to investigate possible impeachable offences committed by Nixon.

In any case, even though Cox had been fired, the office of special prosecutor remained. On 17 November, Nixon tried to calm the situation with a televised press conference – held at, of all places, Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. It was during that speech that the president declared, infamously: "I am not a crook." Brazen in its mendacity, the soundbite came to define the scandal.

The spring of 1974 brought a procession of calamities for Nixon as Ehrlichman, Haldeman and other advisors were indicted for crimes including perjury and money laundering committed in their bids to protect the president. Nixon himself could not be charged by a civil court; he would have to be impeached for "high crimes and misdemeanours" through a trial in the US Senate. Such action against a sitting president was rare: before Nixon only Andrew Johnson had been impeached, his presidency surviving by a single vote in 1868.

This fact gave Nixon some degree of security – coupled with the fact that, since impeachment was a political trial, he could use his political capital to ensure support from loyal members of congress. Yet that loyalty would last only as long as the evidence seemed weak, and as long as no further damaging revelations emerged to further discredit the president. As a result, Nixon sought to keep the most dangerous evidence from making its way into the public domain. His lawyers fought every attempt to make the secret recordings public, including in the US Supreme Court, an arena in which they felt confident that executive privilege would prevail.

Other risks remained, however. The discovery by Nixon's lawyers that one of the tapes, dated 20 June 1972, contained an 18-minute gap in the recording led to one of the most bizarre episodes in the whole saga. Nixon's long-serving secretary, ***Rose Mary Woods*** 9, claimed that she had accidentally erased the first five minutes of the section while transcribing it. Asked by Sirica to demonstrate how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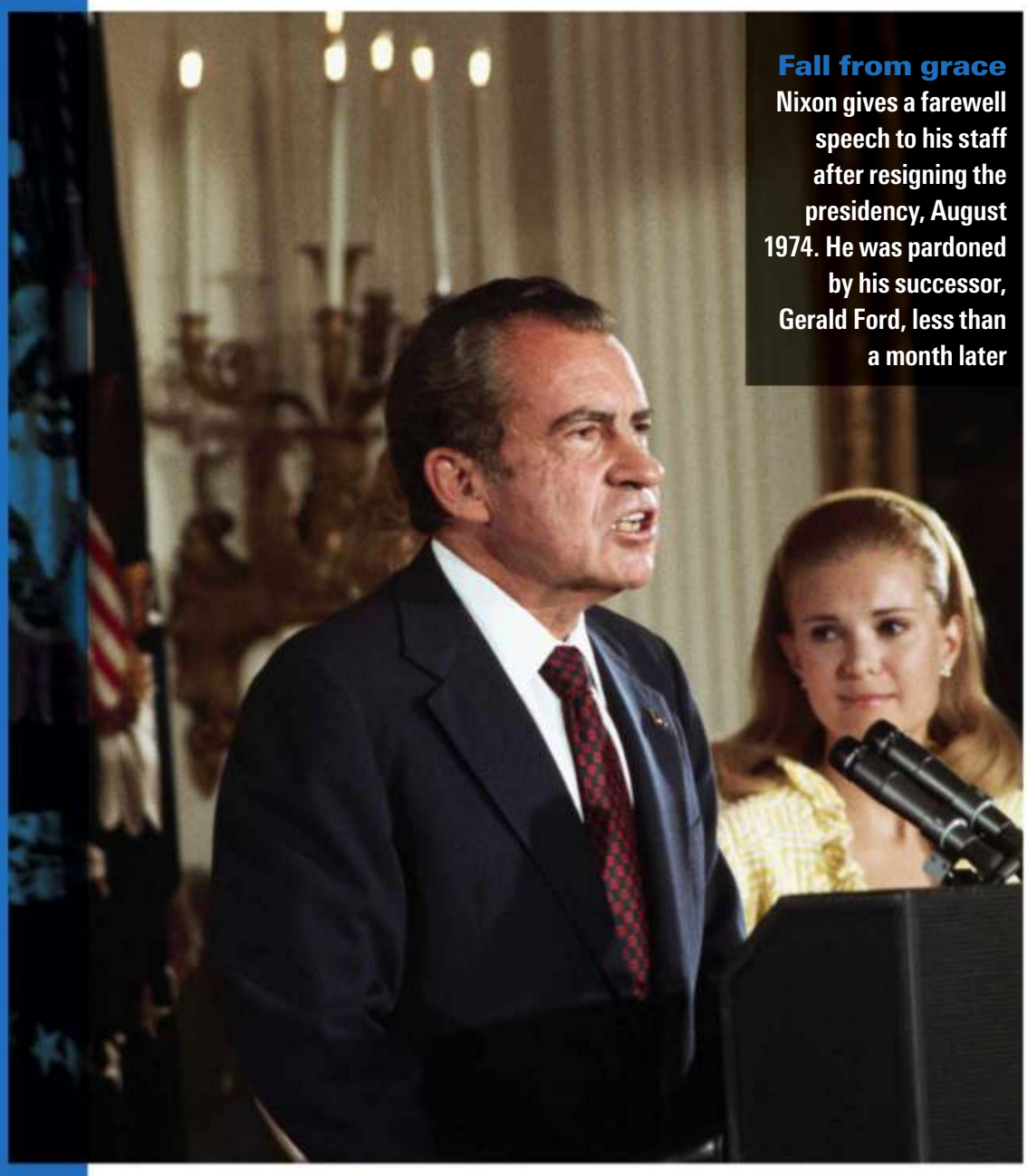
Archibald Cox
Fired as special prosecutor by Nixon, sparking a huge backlash

9

Rose Mary Woods
Claimed to have erased a crucial section of Nixon's recordings by mistake



Fall from grace Nixon gives a farewell speech to his staff after resigning the presidency, August 1974. He was pardoned by his successor, Gerald Ford, less than a month later

she had done so, Woods failed to recreate her actions – unsurprisingly, because they were impossible. It soon emerged that the tape bore evidence of several attempts to erase the material, and Woods' fumbled explanations made Nixon look even more suspect. By now, even his staunchest allies were deserting him.

The arrival of Sirica's Grand Jury documentation in March 1974, naming Nixon as a co-conspirator, marked the beginning of the end. On 9 May, a formal process of impeachment started in the House Judiciary Committee. Among those assisting lead special counsel John Doar was recent law graduate Hillary Rodham – later Clinton.

The final blow came on 24 July 1974 when the Supreme Court ruled that the tapes were not covered by executive privilege, meaning that the president was required to deliver them to the district court. On 5 August, Nixon also released a transcript of the recording of him and Haldeman plotting to stop the FBI from investigating the Watergate break-in – which became known as the "Smoking Gun" tape. With his involvement clear, Nixon's support evaporated. On 9 August, he resigned the presidency.

Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, granted the disgraced president a pardon within weeks. It was a move that enraged some – particularly because many of the people around him had not been so fortunate, and because it was Nixon's choices that had resulted in his disgrace. He could have allowed the FBI investigation to go ahead; he could have aborted the cover-up. Instead, he was ultimately condemned by his actions, his vanity and his paranoia. H

SHADOW OF A SCANDAL

How Watergate loomed large in US politics and culture for decades

Watergate ended the presidency of Richard Nixon, but not his influence. He acted as an unofficial advisor on foreign policy for his successors until his death in 1994, a two-decade period during which he was able to at least partially salvage his reputation. The scandal brought disgrace to Nixon's advisors, but also yielded some degree of fame: G Gordon Liddy, for instance, was able to carve out a career as a "shock jock" political commentator. Many others wrote personal memoirs chronicling the affair, offering competing accounts about their respective degrees of blame and responsibility.

Among the US population at large, the scandal cemented a sense of disengagement with politics. For liberals, Watergate amplified a feeling of unease, sparked by the Vietnam War, about the role and practices of government, and fed into the idea of a secret state conspiring to protect the powerful. Conservatives, meanwhile, pointed to the detachment of the east-coast political establishment, making increasingly fervent calls to "drain the swamp" from Reagan's 1980s presidency onwards.

Although Nixon resigned before he could be removed from office, articles of impeachment have since become a blunt instrument and a regular feature of the US political process. Bill Clinton was impeached in 1998 for lying under oath and obstructing justice but was acquitted on both counts the following year. Donald Trump was impeached, and acquitted, twice.

Finally, Watergate left us with a suffix for the ages – one that has been applied to a whole host of political and cultural scandals around the world since Nixon's resignation.

Bill Clinton in 1999 after being acquitted in his impeachment trial. Watergate paved the way for such proceedings

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Clifford Williamson is lecturer in modern British and American history at Bath Spa University

LISTEN Hear an exploration of the Watergate scandal on BBC World Service's **Witness History:** *bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszmsj*

Snuffers, scrapers and murder-holes

Accompanies the BBC Radio 4 documentary **The Hidden History of the Front Door**

BBC RADIO 4

From medieval portcullises to the Regency craze for "Wellington" knockers, the evolution of the front door offers a unique entry point to British history. **Rachel Hurdley** looks at six ways in which doors reflect our desire to avert danger, and impress our neighbours

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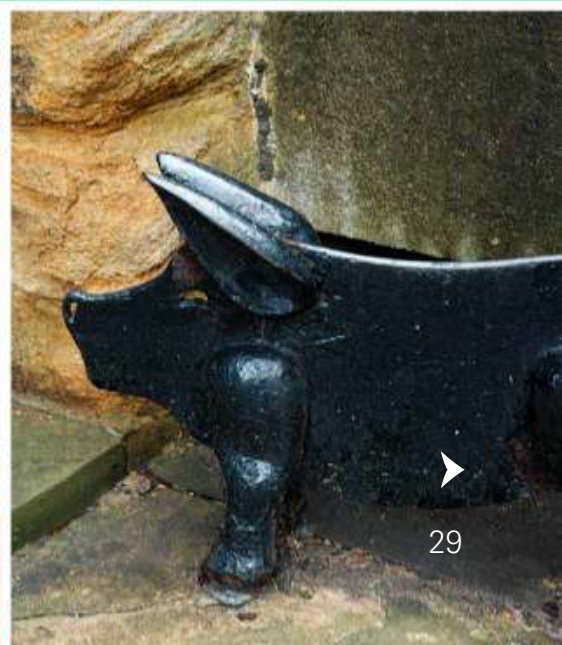


1 No-go areas

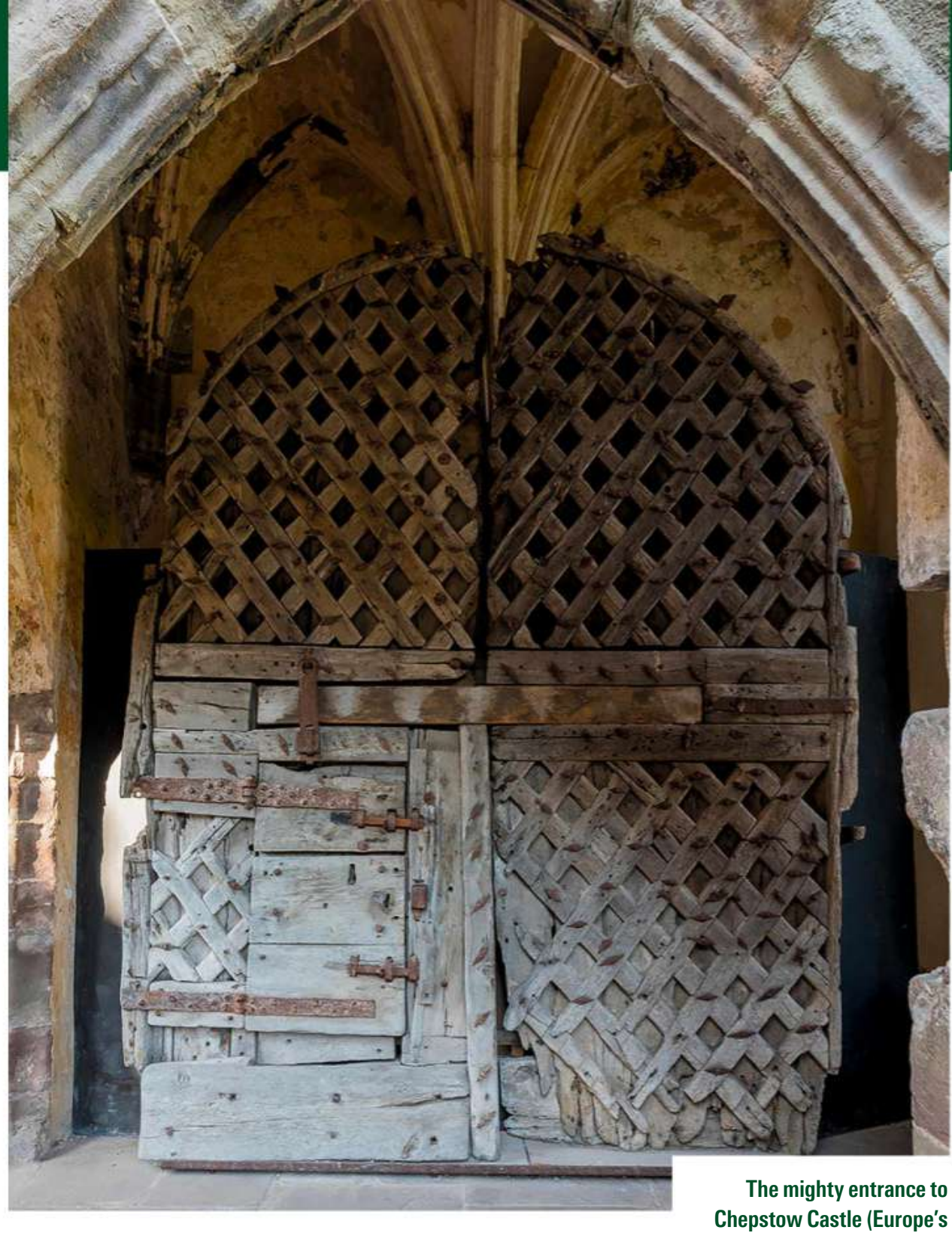
From plague houses to Number 10, doors have long been used to keep threats out – and in

To most of us today, front doors are mere portals between the outside world and the privacy of our own homes, worthy of little more than a clean and perhaps a new lick of paint every now and then. But if you were charged with the defence of a castle in the Middle Ages, they could be the difference between life and death.

Doors were the weak spot in even the best medieval fortifications, and by the 12th century, great efforts were being made to ensure entry was difficult for attackers. Before they even reached the door, assailants might have to negotiate the drawbridge across the moat and quickly get through before the "quick release" portcullis was lowered, a security system that allowed castle defenders vital time to prepare.

Even more effective was the tactic of trapping attackers between two portcullises, and then hurling down rocks from "murder holes" in the roof. Herefordshire's Goodrich Castle, among others, had arrow slits opening into the gatehouse, allowing defenders to shoot those unfortunate enough to be trapped inside. If you were brave enough to attempt to breach King's Gate at Caernarfon Castle, you'd have to negotiate two drawbridges, five doors and six portcullises.

The earliest surviving castle door in Europe also happens to be one of its most impressive – and that's found at Chepstow Castle, commissioned by Sir William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke. Made no later than 1190, the door was ahead of its time in a number of ways: the outer vertical oak planks were originally clad with wrought iron, which meant that it was impervious to fire; it was an early example of oak being sawn, rather than cleaved with axes and wedges; and it was strengthened by inner horizontal latticework. Measuring in at 2.5m wide by 3.5m tall, this mighty entrance put off invaders so comprehensively that they chose to attack the walls instead.



The mighty entrance to Chepstow Castle (Europe's earliest surviving castle door) employed state-of the-art 12th-century technology to keep foes at bay

King's Gate at Caernarfon Castle bristled with security systems including two drawbridges, five doors and six portcullises

A show of steel

Britain's most famous front door is surely the black one at 10 Downing Street. That door was made of wood – until it came under attack from Provisional IRA mortar shells in 1991. Following the incident, the old door was replaced by two blast-proof steel ones. Only one is hanging in situ at any particular time, of course – the other kept in reserve for when repair or decoration is required.

The door to 10 Downing Street was the focus of protests long before the 1990s. In 1907, suffragettes Irene Fenwick Miller, Annie Kenney and Flora Drummond were accused of "Disorderly conduct at Downing Street… further, wilfully knocking at the door of No 10 without lawful excuse." However, as records at the National Archives show, "at the request of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Prime Minister… the charge was not proceeded with and they were allowed to go."

Front doors could also be employed to protect those *outside* a building – especially when pestilence was raging through a city. In 1665, for example, the Mayor of London stipulated in one of his regulations that "every house visited [by the plague] to be marked with a red cross of a foot long in the middle of the door, evident to be seen, and with these usual printed words, that is to say: 'Lord, have mercy upon us'."

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Jewish people have long placed a biblical scroll known as a Mezuzah next to their front doors in search of God's protection

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2 Keeping demons at bay

Doors were on the front line of an eternal battle between good and evil

Front doors may have offered protection against enemy soldiers from the physical world. But could they do the same for malign forces from beyond the grave? That was a question that weighed heavily on people's minds across the medieval and early modern periods.

Evil spirits were, it was believed, constantly seeking to breach a house's defences, often gaining access via weak points such as draughty thresholds. As James VI of Scotland wrote in his 1597 treatise, *Daemonologie*: "And if they enter as a spirit onelie, anie place where the aire may come in at, is large inough an entrie for them…"

So how could you protect your premises from such malevolent incursions? One option was to fight hellfire with holy fire. Candles – especially those blessed by priests following celebrations such as candlemass – could act as powerful deterrents to evil spirits planning to wreak havoc in the home. (According to the research of building archaeologist James Wright, the candles were used to make tear-drop-shaped burn marks around doors and other entrance points.)

One artefact that's long been kept besides Jewish householders' front doors is the Mezuzah, a scroll containing an Old Testament verse thought to ensure God's protection.

Yet perhaps the best known of all protective devices is the horseshoe. This harks back to an old belief that the devil asked a blacksmith to shoe his hooves. Recognising his customer, the canny blacksmith shod him with red-hot shoes. The devil, so the story goes, cast them off in pain – and still recoils at the sight of a horseshoe hanging from a front door.

3 The perils of the cold-call

Woe betide those who knocked on a door without a well-crafted calling card

Calling cards, like this velvet example from 1875, gave home-owners vital clues about potential visitors' social standing

Few commentators satirised the code of behaviour that governed polite society in Regency England more acutely than Jane Austen. And Austen brought that razor-sharp eye for detail to bear in her novel *Northanger Abbey*. The author describes how Catherine Morland knocks on Miss Tilney's front door and hands the servant her calling card. The servant returns and "with a look that did not quite confirm his words", informs Catherine that Miss Tilney is out. "With a blush of mortification," Austen tells us, "Catherine left the house."

As Austen's words reveal, by the 19th century, the private home was increasingly viewed as just that: private. Visitors could only gain entry via the etiquette of the calling card – and if their card was rebuffed, humiliation awaited.

In fact, in the highest stratum of society, the entire process of knocking on a front door was governed by a strict set of rules. "Morning visits" were between 11am and 3pm. And to avoid the indignity of a snub, visitors might send their footman ahead with their card. The card itself was a vital conveyor of information – for, as John Young writes in 1879's *Our Deportment*, "its texture, style of engraving, and even the hour of leaving it" offered critical clues as to the visitor's social position.

It wasn't just callers who had to adhere to a strictly defined etiquette. In the 1825 *Footman's Directory and Butler's Remembrancer*, Thomas Cosnett advises footmen not to shut the door until the visitor had walked away, for to do so "whilst they are still in the front of it, is disrespectful and a breach of good manners."

No 1, Royal Crescent, with its torch-snuffer perched above the railings next to the front door.
INSET: **The "Wellington" door-knocker shows the Iron Duke's hand, his staff and a victory wreath**

4 Front door furniture

From torch-snuffers to boot-scrapers, the well-to-do pulled out all the stops to accessorise their entrances

Take a stroll up to 1, Royal Crescent in Bath – one of Georgian Britain's architectural gems – and you may catch sight of a wrought-iron cone above the railings near the front door. This strange object looks like an over-sized candle snuffer, and that's pretty much what it was. But, instead of snuffing out candles, it extinguished the torches that illuminated the pedestrians' way before street lights became widespread in the early to mid-19th century.

The Royal Crescent torch-snuffer is a high-end example of what can only be described as front door "furniture" – accessories that enabled Georgians and Victorians to express their wealth and taste around the entrances to their residences, while also giving us an insight into the changing habits of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Take walking, for example. Before the late 18th century, when cities were criss-crossed by filthy streets, this was viewed as the preserve of the poor. But, once pavements were improved, walking became a fashionable activity. Cue the rise of the boot-scraper, designed to clean footwear muddied during a perambulation. By the mid-Victorian era, increasingly elaborate cast-iron boot-scrapers adorned front and back doors across Britain.

Knocker-wrenching

Another form of front door furniture – the door-knocker – became similarly ornate. These could be installed to ward off evil or bring good luck. However, they were also used to communicate a message: a bow of crêpe on the knocker represented a death; felt swathing told of a killing; a white glove meant a birth; while a bunch of flowers signalled a marriage.

By the end of Victoria's reign, door-knockers became so extravagant that they'd inspired an illicit new craze: "knocker wrenching". In 1896, the *Daily Mail* described Lord Charles Beresford's efforts to steal the Marquis of Bath's dolphin door-knockers. According to the report, "Lord Charles hopped out, carrying a stout rope. One end of this was attached to the knockers and the other to the body of the cab, the titled driver then being ordered to 'whip up'. This he did. The horse sprang forward and out came not only the knockers, but also the panels of the door."

Probably the most celebrated door-knocker of the 19th century was the "Wellington", created by ironmonger David Bray in honour of the Duke of Wellington's victories in Spain and Portugal in 1814. Following the battle of Waterloo a year later, the door-knocker became even more popular, with the *Morning Post* declaring that "every knock brings home to the bosom… the final downfall of the enemy of the rights and liberties of mankind".

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5 Pathways to the past

The Victorian vogue for nostalgia was writ large in their porches

In the mid-19th century, another front door accoutrement came into fashion: the tiled porch. After inheriting his father's tile factory in 1836, Herbert Minton revolutionised tile production, making them more affordable.

Soon, chequered and geometric patterns were flowing from tiled paths through front doors and into halls across Britain. Step into a porch in an upper or middle-class Victorian home, and the chances are you'd be greeted by a riot of flowers, birds, literary characters and idealised rural scenes.

These designs reflected a broader trend in Gothic Revival architecture, since they resembled the floors of medieval churches. In fact, a hankering for the past loomed large in the Victorian vogue for decorated tiles. In a rapidly urbanising society, these designs – especially those inspired by flora and fauna – resonated with a yearning for bucolic idylls in simpler times.

Such nostalgia can also been seen in the rise of the house name, as the research of the historical linguist Laura Wright shows. Monikers such as "Orchard House" and "The Willows" betray a longing for what had been lost in the race to industrialisation.

The period from 1850 to the Second World War was a golden age for house-naming, as more and more Britons owned their own homes. Railways connected sprawling suburbs with town centres, where builders named houses to attract buyers, or new homeowners sought to personalise their particular mass-developed house.

Builders might name new homes to give an impression of solid respectability, such as "Merton Villa" or "Grosvenor House". And world events were reflected in patriotic monikers such as "Trafalgar House".

A c1875 tile depicting cranes, a Japanese symbol of longevity

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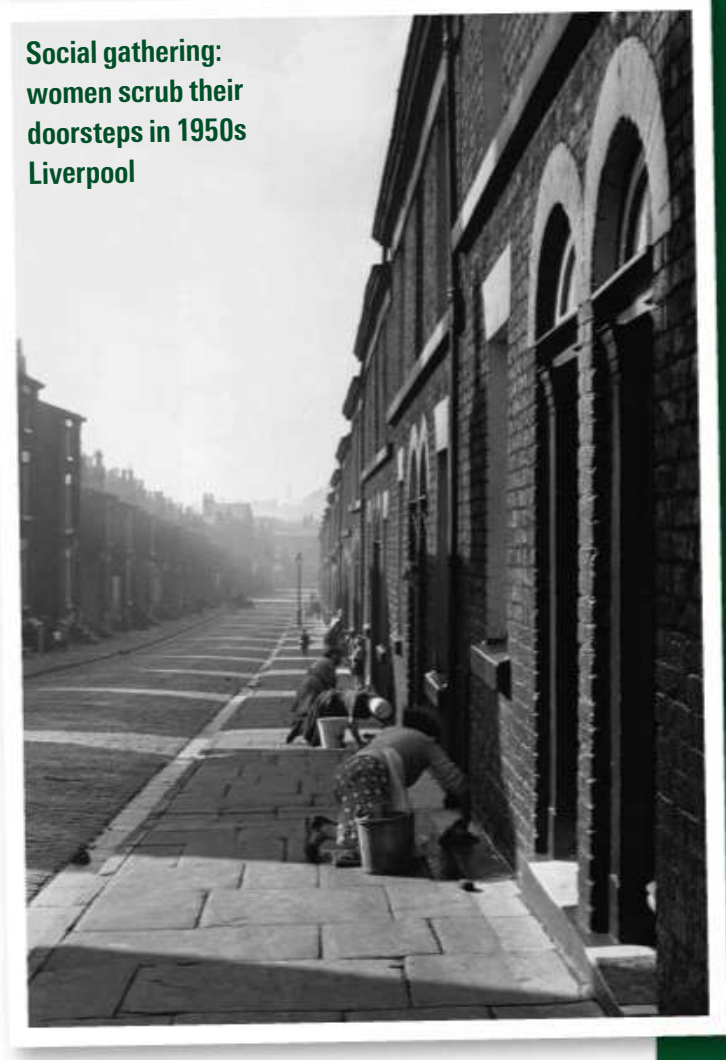
6 Scrubbing up nicely

Mill workers' wives transformed their doorsteps – with a little help from a donkey



Social gathering: women scrub their doorsteps in 1950s Liverpool

You'd be hard-pressed to find a cast-iron torch-snuffer outside the terraced houses of northern England at the turn of the 20th century. Here, tiled porches depicting rural idylls were rarer than hen's teeth. But that didn't stop their owners giving their front doors a little extra polish – and for that they used something called the "donkey stone".

The donkey stone was a type of scouring block employed to scrub, clean and give extra grip to stairs and doorsteps, primarily in mill towns. The name originated from the Manchester-based "Donkey" brand, which imprinted a donkey stamp on the stones.

Cleaning a doorstep may sound simple, but there was an art to using a donkey stone. After scrubbing the steps, women would deploy the stones along the front edge and vertical sides to give their work a neat, decorative finish.

Thanks to an abundance of litter and the soot from coal fires, women had to "do the step" on a regular basis. However, it gave them an opportunity to socialise with their neighbours, all the while attempting to craft the most aesthetically pleasing doorstep on the street.

Looming threat

Another activity that would bring people together on their front doorstep was lace-pulling. In cities such as Nottingham – which remained a hub of Britain's lace industry into the second half of the 20th century – women would sit out on their doorsteps, pulling out the thread that connected pieces of lace that had just rolled off the factory loom. A child would then collect these up in a pram, cover them with a clean sheet and run them back to the factory.

Like "doing the step", this practice has long since passed into history, a victim of Britain's manufacturing decline over the past five decades.

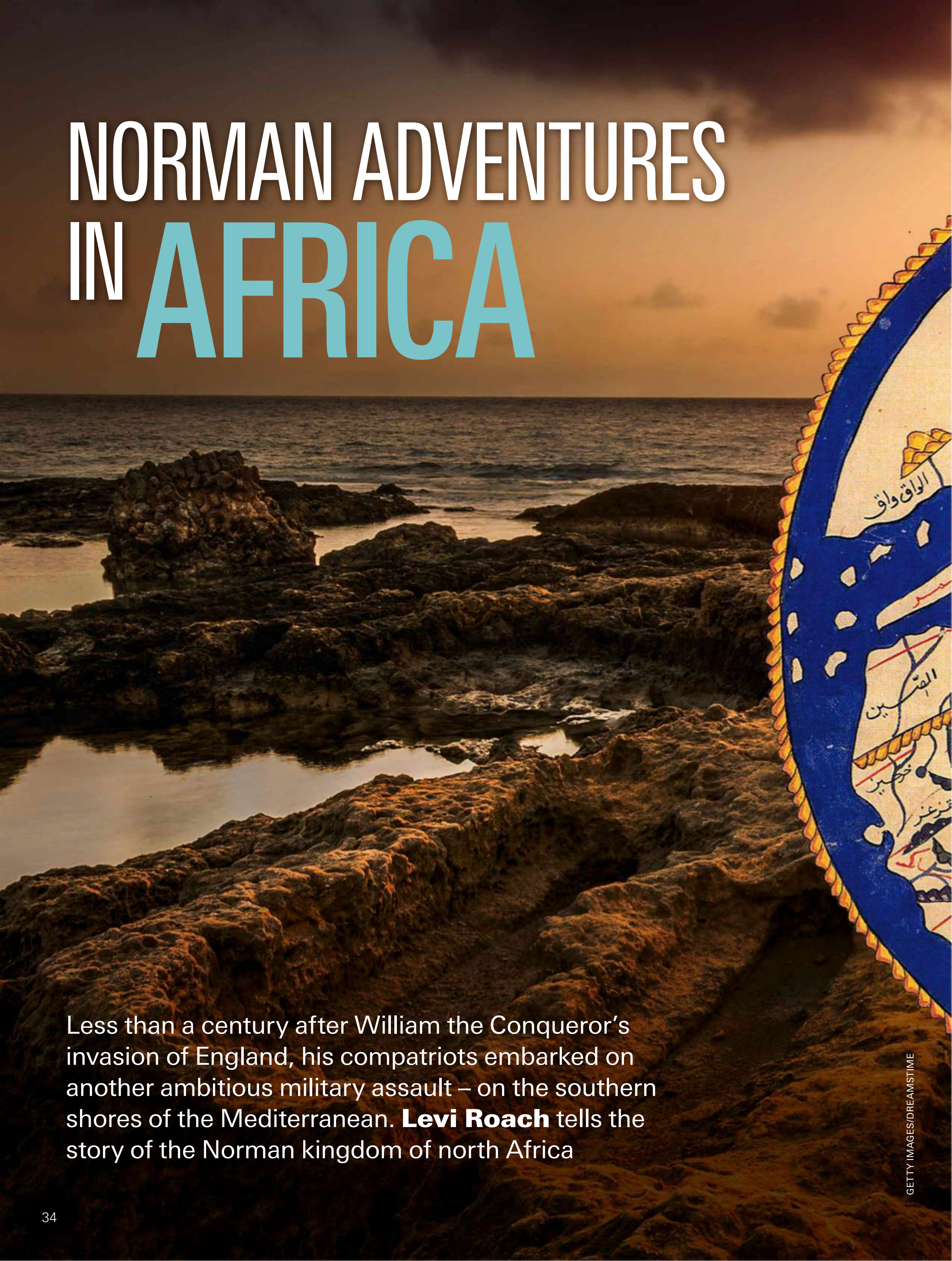
What hasn't changed, however, is the front door's status as a symbol of wealth and taste. In fact, you could argue that its position as a marker of social superiority has reached its zenith in some recent high-rise developments in Britain and the US. The rich enter the hotel-like lobby to access all the luxury and leisure activities contained within. Social housing tenants, on the other hand, access their flats near the bins and service entrance, through what has been termed the "poor door". Have we come so very far from the days of the medieval portcullis or the Regency footman? Perhaps not. H

Rachel Hurdley is a research fellow in cultural sociology at Cardiff University

LISTEN **The Hidden History of the Front Door**, presented by Rachel Hurdley, is available to listen to on BBC Sounds

ONLINE To read Rachel Hurdley's recent feature on the **history of windows**, head to *historyextra.com/windows-history*

NORMAN ADVENTURES IN AFRICA



Less than a century after William the Conqueror's invasion of England, his compatriots embarked on another ambitious military assault – on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. **Levi Roach** tells the story of the Norman kingdom of north Africa

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World view

A world map (with south at the top), based on a compendium created at the court of Norman king Roger II. Sicily, Roger's original power base, is depicted bottom right, below the north African coast. The rocky shore of the Tunisian city of Mahdia – conquered by the Normans in 1148 – is shown in the background

One day in the early 1070s, the Norman count Roger I of Sicily was hosting a meeting of his advisers when something they said irked him. "Roger lifted his thigh and made a great fart," reported the Muslim chronicler Ibn al-Athīr, "saying: 'By my faith, here is far better counsel than you have given'."

The Normans are best known for their conquests. So it may come as a surprise to learn that Roger's flatulence signalled his contempt for advice that he should join a planned invasion – of Africa, the great continent across the Mediterranean to the south.

In the years preceding this incident, Roger's influence along the seaboards of southern Europe and north Africa had been growing steadily. Indeed, the Normans represented a rising power on both sides of the Mediterranean and, by the second half of the 11th century, their neighbours were beginning to sit up and take notice.

It was in this context that messengers from Genoa and Pisa had arrived at Roger's court, inviting him to join them in a military expedition against Mahdia, the capital of the Zirid rulers of north Africa (now on Tunisia's east coast). The two Italian city-states were looking to muscle in on the lucrative trade between the western and eastern Mediterranean, much of which passed along the north African coast, and they rated their chances of success far higher with the Normans at their side.

Roger's advisers were keen to join the expedition but, as we know from Ibn al-Athīr, the count was sceptical. As Roger noted, if the expedition against Mahdia were to succeed, then the profits would go mostly to Pisa and Genoa. But if it failed, it was the Normans who would face the consequences. Roger had recently concluded a peace with Tamīm ibn al-Muʿizz, the Zirid ruler. He did not want to risk this truce for a speculative venture.

So the count watched from the sidelines as the attack on Mahdia went ahead in 1074 – but the Normans would not sit on their hands for long. The following century, they *did* go on the offensive in north Africa and – thanks to their own skill and a divided enemy – established a kingdom there.

That Norman outpost in the heart of Muslim north Africa – the region then known as Ifrīqya – is among the least studied yet most fascinating episodes of their many conquests throughout the Middle Ages. It's a tale far less famous than those of their campaigns across southern Italy and, of course, England. Yet it's a story that richly deserves to be told.

Conquest and settlement

Norman mercenaries had been plying their trade in southern Italy since the early years of the 11th century. And, starting in the 1040s – two decades before that other celebrated Norman conqueror, William of Normandy, faced Harold II at the battle of Hastings – they began a systematic process of conquest and settlement. The first places to fall were the provinces of Calabria and Apulia (Puglia) on the mainland. But by the time of the Mahdia campaign in 1074, much of Sicily (including the capital, Palermo) was in Norman hands.

Once the Normans had secured southern Italy, they began looking farther afield. In the 1080s, Robert Guiscard – Roger's elder brother (and nominal superior) – led a set of daring attacks on the Byzantine-ruled Balkans and Greece. And in 1091, Roger himself secured the strategically significant island of Malta in the middle of the Mediterranean. The island was soon lost, but that would prove a temporary setback.

In 1105, Roger's son, successor and namesake, Roger II, became Count of Sicily. Under his stewardship, Norman power around the Mediterranean surged to new heights. He retook Malta in 1127 and, that same year, secured control of Calabria and Apulia, succeeding his relative Duke William II. Until that point, Roger had held Sicily under William's oversight; now he ruled in his own right. Three years later, Roger declared himself king of Sicily.

The result of these changes was that political power and authority within the new Norman domains in Italy shifted decisively south-west from Apulia and Calabria to Sicily. Now the royal court lay just a short boat ride away from the north African coast.

Heading south
A *trifollaro* minted under Count Roger I, whose rule saw Norman power in Italy spread south to Sicily

Roger was clearly looking to expand in that region. His position there had already been strengthened by the dependence of north Africa on grain supplies from Sicily, caused in part by the increasingly severe droughts suffered by the region. Roger had already locked horns with the Zirids in the early 1120s – and in 1135, internal divisions within Ifrīqya

NORMAN REALMS

Our map shows lands ruled by Normans and neighbouring powers

1 Normandy First settled by Viking Northmen (from which the term "Normans" derives) around AD 911 under the auspices of King Charles "the Simple" of West Francia

2 England Conquered by William of Normandy in 1066 after his decisive victory at the battle of Hastings

3 Wales Largely conquered by Norman marcher lords starting in the late 1060s

4 Scotland Settled by substantial numbers of Normans from the 1120s, actively encouraged by the native Scottish dynasty

5 Ireland Largely conquered by Anglo-Norman barons starting in 1167

6 Southern Italy Settled by Normans from the early 11th century. By the 1040s, they were carving out enclaves in Apulia (Puglia) and Calabria; by 1091, all of Sicily was taken

7 Anatolia Location of a short-lived Norman kingdom founded in the 1070s by Roussel de Bailleul, a Norman mercenary in Byzantine service. In 1073, Roussel and his men sought to take Constantinople (now Istanbul)

8 Antioch One of the longest-lasting crusader states, founded in 1098 by Bohemond of Taranto, a scion of the Norman Hauteville dynasty that ruled southern Italy

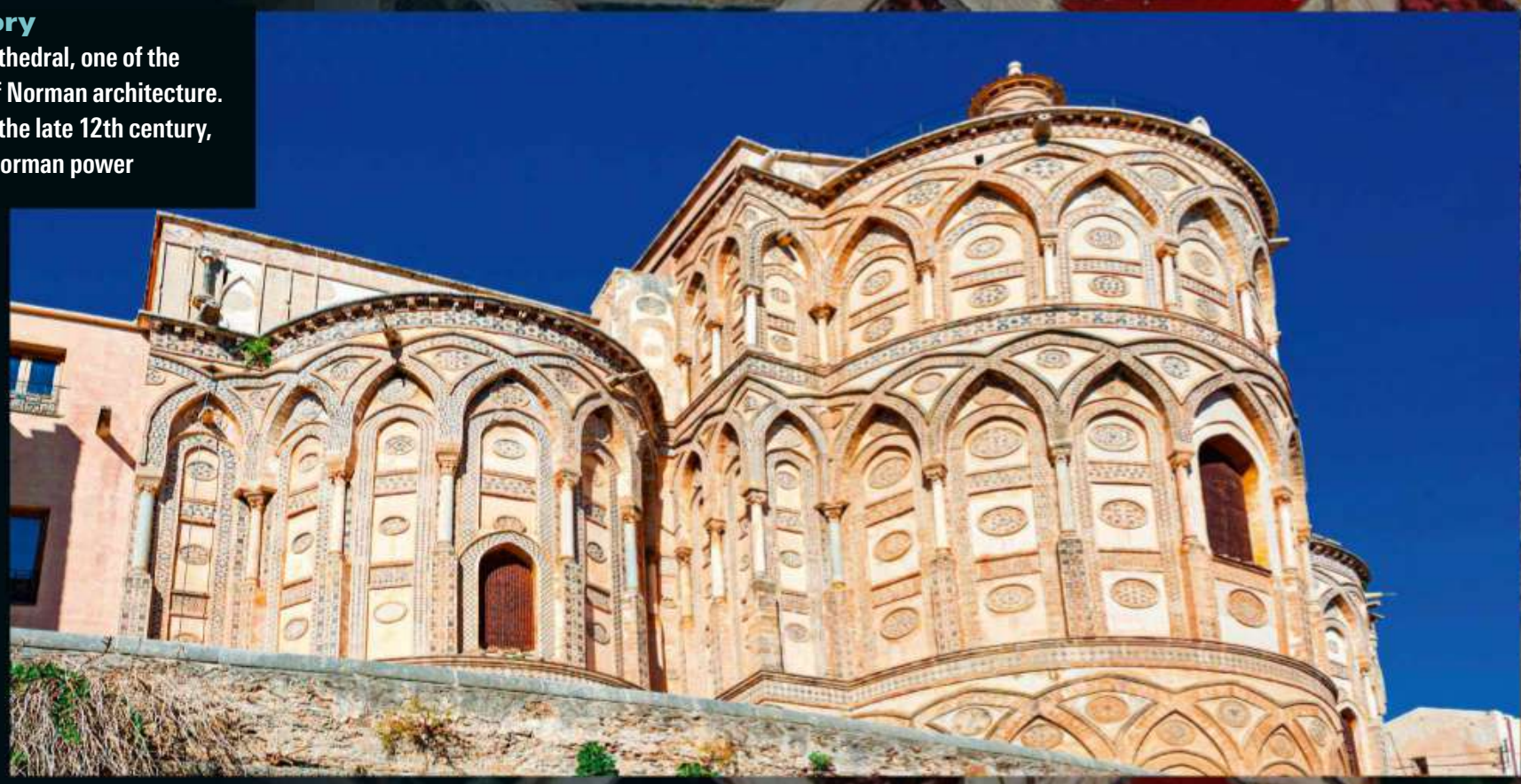
9 North Africa The Normans established a kingdom along the southern Mediterranean coast from the 1140s, before being ejected by the Almohads just over a decade later

The Normans began a process of conquest and settlement in southern Italy – then began looking farther afield

MAP BY **PAUL HEWITT – BATTLEFIELD DESIGN**

Power and glory

Sicily's Monreale Cathedral, one of the greatest examples of Norman architecture. When it was built in the late 12th century, Sicily was a hub of Norman power



ALAMY

provided the ideal pretext for intervention. The local emir, al-Hassan, appealed for Roger's help against the Hammadid rulers of Bougie (now Béjaïa, Algeria) to his west. Roger acceded to the request – but his fleet did more than just assist al-Hassan: it also seized the strategic island of Djerba, just off the coast south of Mahdia.

This was a statement of intent. At an assembly in Merseburg, north-eastern Germany, Byzantine and Venetian emissaries reported – with some exaggeration – that Roger had now "seized Africa, which is acknowledged to be the third part of the world".

Coastal attacks

Over the next few years, divisions continued to dog the Zirids. In 1141/42, Roger leveraged these to secure the Zirids' formal submission, and over the following months the Normans attacked coastal towns across the region. These actions ostensibly aimed to shore up al-Hassan's regime, but Roger soon shifted from supporting his Zirid allies to replacing them. In 1143, Djidjelli (now Jijel, Algeria) on the north coast was sacked. The following year, Bresk in the west was taken, and the island of Kerkenna, off the coast south of Mahdia, was seized.

When Roger's troops took Tripoli (now in Libya) in 1146, the foundations were laid for a new Norman kingdom. So far, his expeditions had been little more than acts of banditry. Now he began the transition from raiding to conquest. Roger's men were careful to work with the local Islamic population. Though Muslims were forced to pay an additional tax, they were allowed to continue worshipping much as they had before. This took the sting out of Christian rule.

For the Zirids, the final blow landed in 1148, when a large Norman-Sicilian fleet appeared off Mahdia. Realising that the game was up, al-Hassan fled inland. Fearing Norman rule, many of the inhabitants followed suit but, when they heard of Roger's even-handed treatment of the local population, most returned.

Momentum was now with Roger and his men, and they soon secured Sūsa (Sousse) and Sfax, strategic port cities lying north and south of Mahdia, respectively. Elsewhere, Tunis was reduced to tributary status and Gabès, south of Sfax, also acknowledged Roger's lordship. Impressed by this progress, Pope Eugenius III consecrated a new "archbishop of Africa" (ie Ifrīqya) to oversee the region. The domains of the radical Almohads – who, in contrast with most Islamic powers, did not tolerate Christian minorities – had recently been expanding in north-western Africa. Roger's realm promised to act as a welcome bulwark against them.

Crossing cultures
Roger II of Sicily, depicted in an Arabic-style image in the Palatine Chapel of the Norman Palace in Palermo. Both here and in areas of north Africa he conquered, Roger was tolerant of Muslim customs and worship

The Normans seemed unstoppable. Ibn al-Athīr, whose account conveys sentiments within Zirid circles, notes that Roger would have conquered "all of the lands of Ifrīqya" had he not been distracted by "many battles" with the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos. Roger's men had been making quick work of the province, so the Second Crusade (1147–49) – during which Roger set his sights on the Byzantine empire, taking Corfu and plundering Greek cities – must have come as welcome relief to many in north Africa.

Roger's own pride in these conquests is clear. He had coinage issued in north Africa and experimented with the title "king of Africa/Ifrīqya", particularly in Arabic documents in his name. (In Roger's trilingual realm, documents were issued in Latin, Greek and Arabic.)

Yet Roger's new north African kingdom was dangerously exposed. To the west were the Almohads, who wouldn't tolerate a

In 1146, the foundations were laid for a new Norman kingdom in Africa – and Roger II began the transition from raiding to conquest

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First count
Roger I, first Norman count of Sicily, attacks a Muslim in a 16th-century sculpture. The island's Islamic emirate finally fell to his forces in 1091, when he turned his gaze to Malta

Spending power
Two sides of a coin minted in 1140 under Roger II of Sicily. Swathes of the north African coast would fall to the Norman ruler over the following decade

Christian neighbour for long. To the east were the Fatimids, the nominal overlords of the Zirids. They had given their tacit approval to Roger's establishment of a north African enclave but, as his domains grew, cracks started to appear in that relationship. The weak Zirids had been of little use to the Fatimids, but the rapidly expanding Normans presented an altogether different problem.

In spring 1153, a large coalition backed by Roger was defeated by the Almohads at Sétif, in what's now Algeria. In response, Roger sent a fleet to take the port of Bône (now Annaba), 200 miles to the north-east, aiming to create a buffer zone. However, the long-term prospects for his African kingdom were starting to look bleak. His death in early 1154 sealed its fate.

A decisive threat

The ensuing years were marked by political instability. Roger's son and heir, William I, rushed to secure his Sicilian and Italian dominions; only once that had been achieved could he turn to affairs in north Africa – but by then it was too late. During the mid- to late 1150s a set of revolts were launched against Norman control, as native rulers sought to re-establish independence, their cause strengthened by the continuing Almohad threat. In the end, it was this factor that proved decisive.

In 1159, a strong Almohad force moved against the coastal cities that had been the linchpins of Norman authority in the region. Tunis soon surrendered, followed by Tripoli, Sfax and Gafsa (in central Tunisia). The Normans offered greater resistance at Mahdia, where the garrison held out for more than six months, but that only delayed the inevitable. Soon, Roger's kingdom of Africa had been swallowed up by the rapidly expanding Almohad caliphate.

Some at the Sicilian court felt that William had done too little, too late – and there may be an element of truth in this. The chronicle attributed to Hugo Falcandus reports that William was easily manipulated by his chief minister, Maio, who often contravened his commands. "Many think that this is why he [William] allowed Africa to be taken," Hugo wrote. But with Almohad pressure mounting, it simply wasn't worth the time, money and manpower necessary to maintain the precarious Norman toehold in north Africa. Roger's original conquests of the 1140s had been opportunistic affairs, assisted by Zirid weakness and Fatimid acquiescence. There was little sense in maintaining them in the face of sustained resistance.

Still, the eclipse of Norman rule was not inevitable. Had Roger lived longer, or the Fatimids proven more amenable, there's no way of knowing how much longer the Norman kingdom might have survived. Had it lasted, Norman influence would have taken an altogether different form.

Consider the fate of Sicily. Here, early Norman rulers – including Roger II – were keen to conciliate the local Muslim population. However, this was pragmatic toleration, not self-conscious multiculturalism. Christians – where possible, Latin (ie Catholic) Christians – were still preferred for senior administrative roles. The result was a slow but steady population shift away from Islam (and also, to a degree, the Greek Orthodox rite). Christian Lombard settlers from the mainland were encouraged, as was conversion. By the 1160s, toleration started giving way to coercion, and such efforts were stepped up the following century, when massacres, forced conversion and expulsions became common.

In 1148, this potentially lay in store for the inhabitants of Ifrīqya. Thankfully for them, it was not to be. Roger II's conquests in the southern Mediterranean constitute a remarkable chapter in medieval history, but also a fleeting one. The Norman kindgom of north Africa was gone – and soon forgotten. H

Levi Roach is associate professor of history at the University of Exeter. His new book, *Empires of the Normans: Makers of Europe, Conquerors of Asia*, is published by John Murray in June

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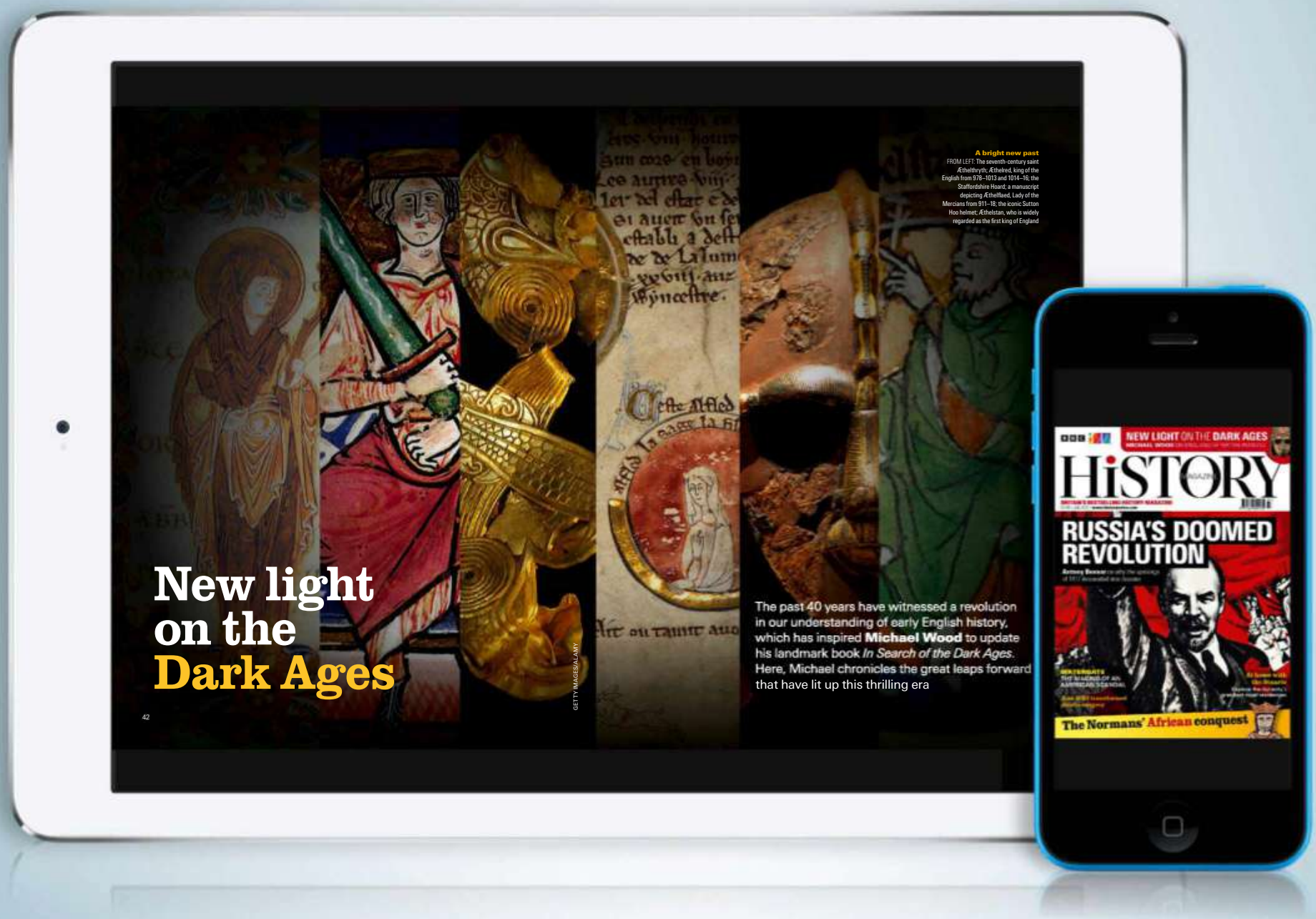
A bright new past
FROM LEFT: The seventh-century saint Æthelthryth; Æthelred, king of the English from 978–1013 and 1014–16; the Staffordshire Hoard, a manuscript depicting Æthelflaed, Lady of the Mercians from 911–18; the iconic Sutton Hoo helmet; Æthelstan, who is widely regarded as the first king of England
New light on the Dark Ages
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The past 40 years have witnessed a revolution in our understanding of early English history, which has inspired **Michael Wood** to update his landmark book *In Search of the Dark Ages*. Here, Michael chronicles the great leaps forward that have lit up this thrilling era
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New light on the Dark Ages

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A bright new past

FROM LEFT: The seventh-century saint Æthelthryth; Æthelred, king of the English from 978–1013 and 1014–16; the Staffordshire Hoard; a manuscript depicting Æthelflaed, Lady of the Mercians from 911–18; the iconic Sutton Hoo helmet; Æthelstan, who is widely regarded as the first king of England

The past 40 years have witnessed a revolution in our understanding of early English history, which has inspired **Michael Wood** to update his landmark book *In Search of the Dark Ages*. Here, Michael chronicles the great leaps forward that have lit up this thrilling era

Earthly treasures
Some of the 1,500 items that comprise the "game-changing" Staffordshire Hoard, which was discovered by a metal-detectorist in 2009

It is hard to believe but the original edition of my book *In Search of the Dark Ages* was published four decades ago. That it has remained in print for so long is testimony to the widespread interest in this fascinating and formative period in British history with its larger than life characters such as Offa of Mercia, Alfred the Great, King Æthelstan and the aptly named Norse warlord Eric Bloodaxe.

But the time has come for a major rewrite. The past 40 years have witnessed a host of important discoveries and major excavations – all of which have combined to revolutionise our view of England before the Norman conquest.

So what's changed? Which great leaps forward have transformed our perceptions of this foundational period in our history? Where better to start than with archaeology. Think, for example, of the re-excavation of the grave mounds at Sutton Hoo from 1983–92; the find (in the 1980s) of the mass tomb of the Viking Great Army at Repton in Derbyshire; and the electrifying discovery of the Danish camp at Torksey on the western border of Lincolnshire (2013–16).

Then, of course, there's been the rise of the metal detector. This has led to a series of game-changing finds – none more illuminating than the astonishing riches of the Staffordshire Treasure. Let's stop to consider this discovery for a moment. If any one find over the past 40 years has shed light on the sheer richness and sophistication of the "Dark Ages", then these 1,500 gold and silver pieces – discovered in 2009 near the village of Hammerwich – is surely it.

The discovery of the Staffordshire Treasure prompted many questions. What was it? Why was it buried? And to whom did it belong? The presence of 45 ornate sword hilts and more than 200 hilt adornments among the treasures has led to the conclusion that it was probably war loot, stripped from weapons and war gear.

As to why was it buried, that remains a mystery. However, it's tempting to think that the hoard was part of the spectacular ransom paid by King Oswy of Northumbria in 655 to his enemy King Penda of Mercia, "an unimaginable collection of royal ornament", as the historian Bede describes it.

The date of the hoard fits perfectly with this theory and, given the exquisite craftsmanship of the gold – one that evokes the glittering half-pagan, half-Christian world of warlords, warriors and bards – there could surely be no more fitting association than with Penda, the last pagan king of the Anglo-Saxons.

Wisdom of the east

The past 40 years have also seen some remarkable early English manuscripts come to light. Perhaps the most important of all was a set of students' teaching notes from Archbishop Theodore and Abbot Hadrian's school in seventh-century Canterbury.

Theodore, a Greek-speaking former Syrian refugee, and Hadrian, a Libyan monk, instituted one of the most significant teaching projects in British history, bringing the wisdom of the Greek east – everything from poetry and grammar to history and theology – to the people of England. However, the teaching notes were discovered not in Canterbury, but Milan. Now further evidence of Theodore and Hadrian's teachings is turning up in many other libraries across Europe – a sign of how just widely disseminated their teachings were.

The pair's lectures were full of details on the flora and fauna of the near east. "Melons?" Theodore is recorded as

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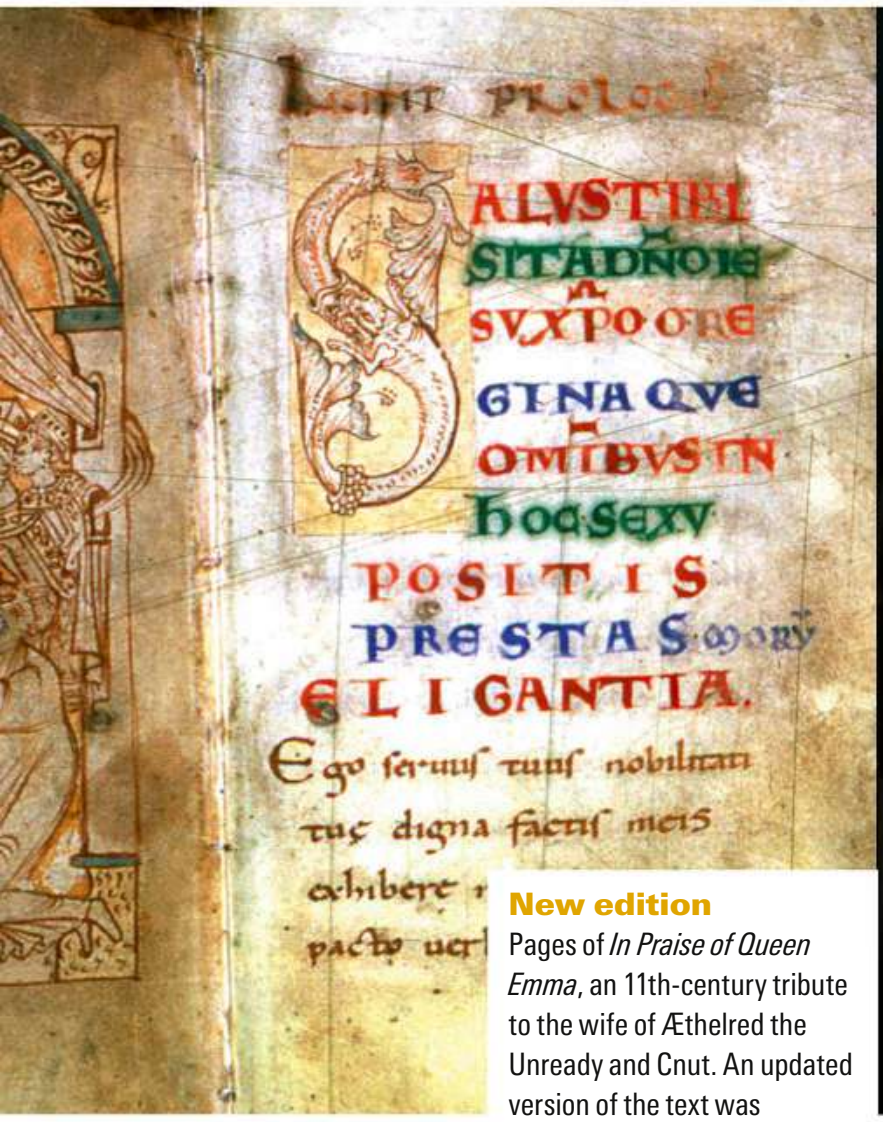
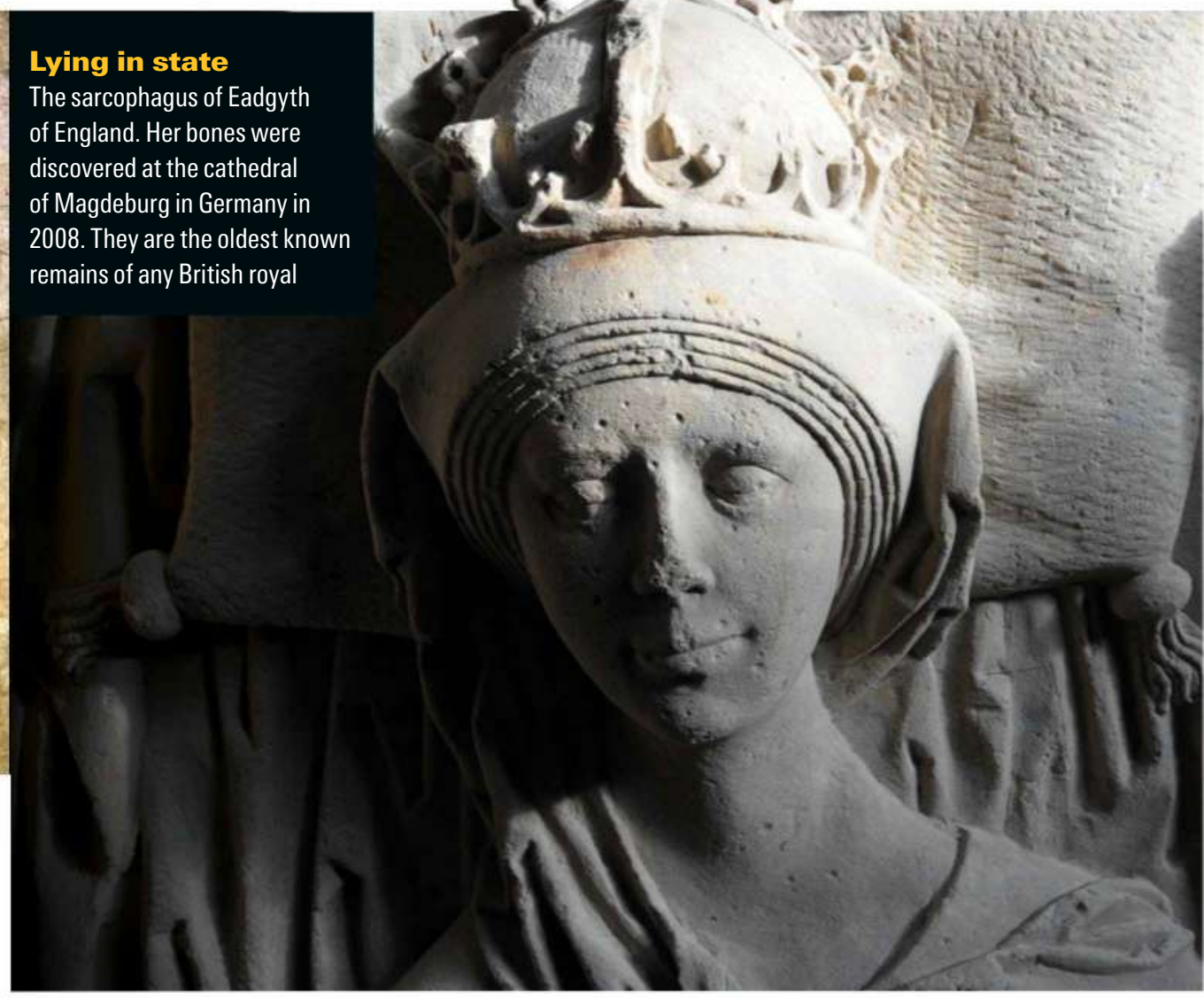


New edition
Pages of *In Praise of Queen Emma*, an 11th-century tribute to the wife of Æthelred the Unready and Cnut. An updated version of the text was discovered in the Devon Record Office in 2008



Lying in state
The sarcophagus of Eadgyth of England. Her bones were discovered at the cathedral of Magdeburg in Germany in 2008. They are the oldest known remains of any British royal

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

saying. "They are like cucumbers, only bigger – in Edessa so big you can only carry two on a camel!" The critical role that Theodore and Hadrian played in the cultural evolution of Anglo-Saxon England has long been recognised. But it's vignettes such as this that truly bring these two great teachers to life.

Among new finds of narrative sources, a revised and updated version of *In Praise of Queen Emma* – a text inspired by the wife of two 11th-century kings, Æthelred the Unready and then Cnut – was identified only recently in the Devon Record Office.

Perhaps the most significant development in the study of early English texts arrived in 2014, when the thousand or so manuscripts and fragments that have survived from the period were published in the magisterial *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* by Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge. It is a truly landmark achievement.

A nose for women's history

The past four decades have also witnessed major advances in the realm of women's history. The first edition of *In Search of the Dark Ages* focused on the deeds of men; in that, it was of its time. When I was a graduate student in the early 1970s, there was still no women's history course in any British university. There has been a huge growth in the subject since, advancing the understanding of every aspect of medieval life and society.

It is sometimes said that it is not possible to write biographies of women in early medieval England. Stories of religious women have survived – St Leoba was the subject of a short account, and Bede describes the lives of Hilda of Whitby and Æthelreda of Ely – but these are shaped by the conventional forms of writing on saints. The things we would really like to know – women's thoughts and feelings, how they lived in such a patriarchal society – are largely hidden from us. It is hard to imagine how they felt about their own lives, how they experienced the world, and the kind of relationships they had with family and friends.

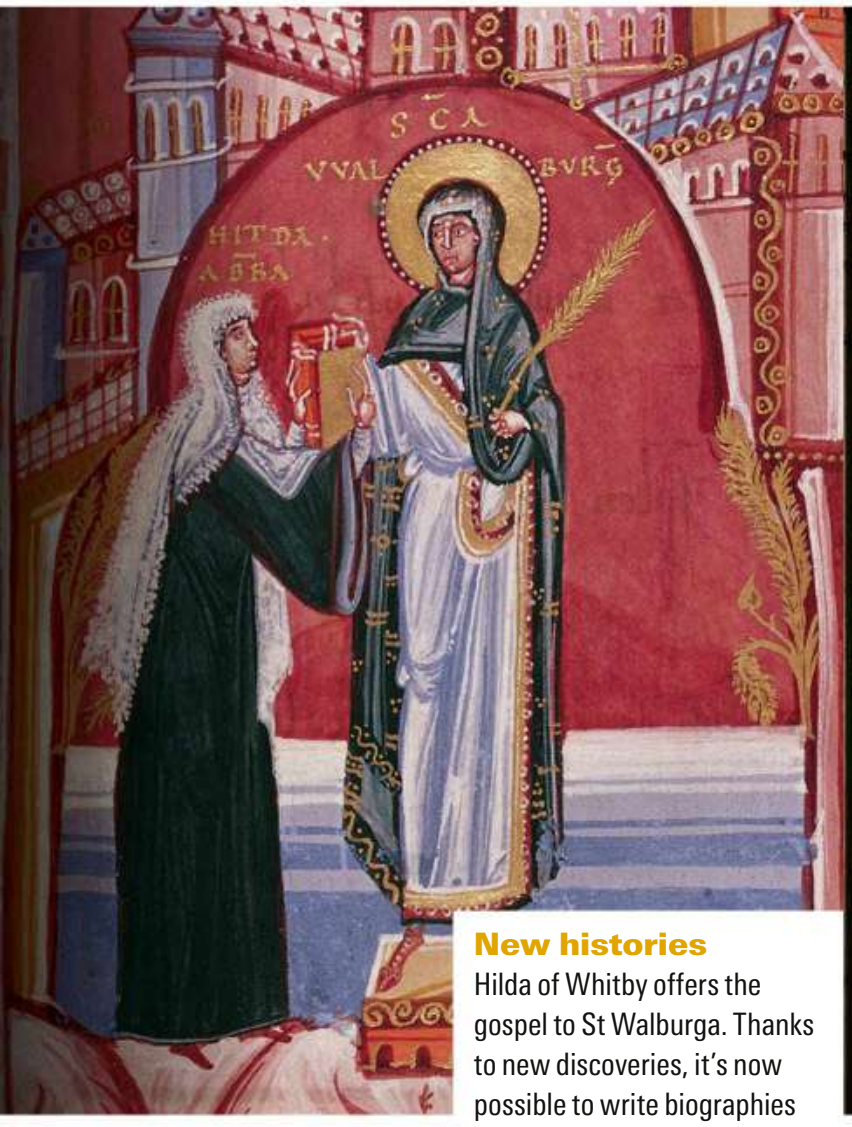
But sometimes the material has been there under our noses all along and – helped by new discoveries and a bit of sympathetic imagination – biographies can be written. In the new edition of the book, I have added chapters on King Alfred's heroic daughter Æthelflaed, Lady of the Mercians, and on Eadgyth, the sister of Æthelstan, who became Queen of Germany.

Eadgyth's fascinating tale can be told from German sources and has been further illuminated by the identification of her bones in her tomb in Magdeburg in 2008. They are the oldest known remains of a British royal.

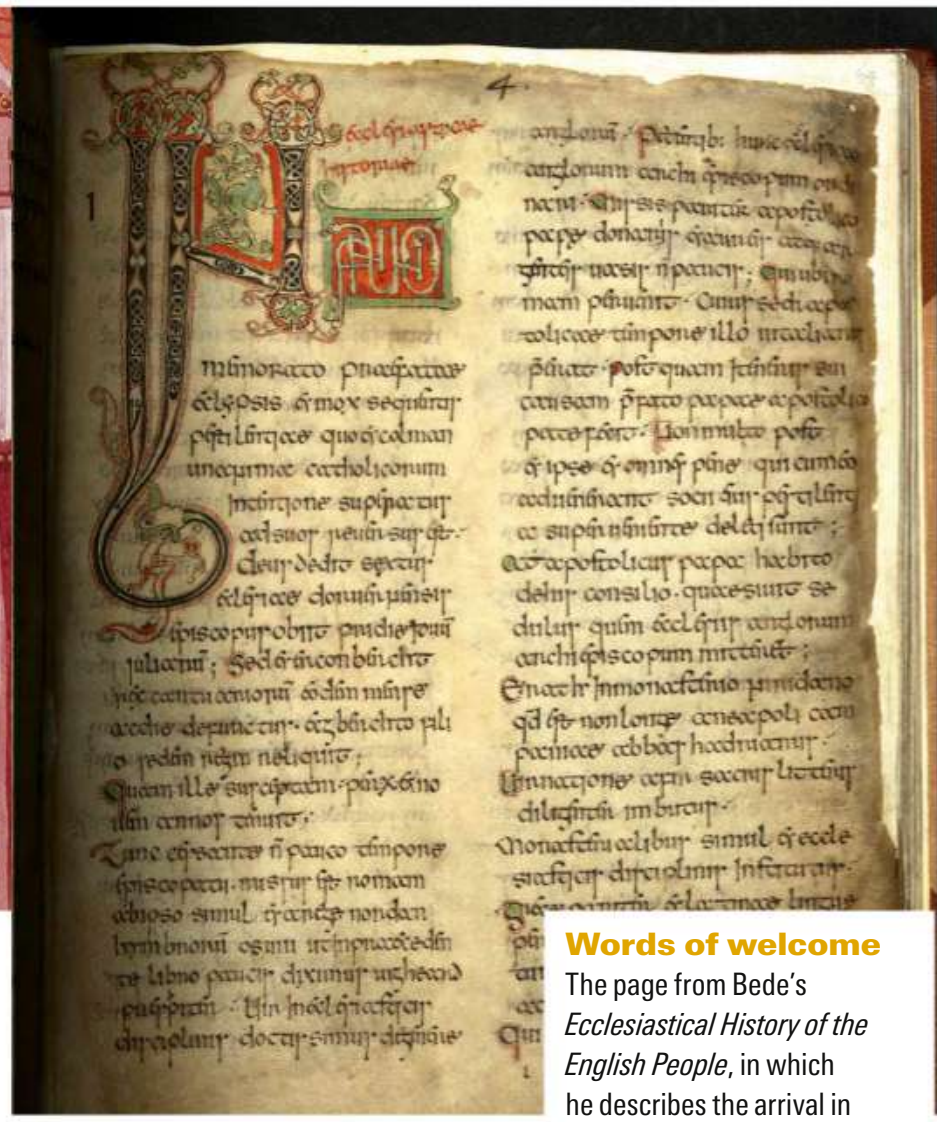
I've also added a chapter on a widow called Wynflaed, who hailed from the middling ranks of society in Wiltshire's Chalke Valley. Wynflaed's daughter Ælfgifu married King Edmund I, before dying in 944, when she was perhaps still only in her early twenties. However Ælfgifu's son Edgar went on to become king of the English – all of which makes Wynflaed an important ancestor of Queen Elizabeth II.

We can get close to Wynflaed through the survival of her will, the first of a woman in English history. This tells us about her family relations and her social circle, including

> The treasures evoke the glittering half-pagan, half-Christian world of warlords, warriors and bards



New histories
Hilda of Whitby offers the gospel to St Walburga. Thanks to new discoveries, it's now possible to write biographies of early English women, argues Michael Wood



Words of welcome
The page from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, in which he describes the arrival in England of Hadrian, a "man of African race"

Norse remains
Finds from the Viking winter camp at Torksey, 872–73. This hoard of more than 1,500 items has transformed our knowledge of Viking settlements in England

her slaves and her cook, Ælfsige. We learn about her clothes, her tapestries and ornaments: "I bequeath to Æthelflaed, Ealhelm's daughter, my double badger skin gown and the linen one. And to Eadgifu two chests and in them my best bed curtain and a linen coverlet and all the bed clothes that go with it, and my dun tunic, my best cloak, my two wooden cups decorated with dots and my old filigree brooch worth six mancuses."

There are final touching – and intriguing –bequests to her daughter: "I grant to my daughter Æthelflaed the storage chest and the utensils and all the useful things that are in it… and everything else not mentioned here, including the books, and other such small items. And I trust that she will be mindful of my soul…"

African origins

In black history, too, there are new insights. There had of course been black people living in Britain during the Roman period, many of whom had come from the near east, north Africa and Mauretania. We know about men like Victor "natione Maurum", who is recorded on a Roman tombstone from South Shields. However, during the thousand years between the end of the Roman world and the first British overseas explorations under the Tudors, black people were few in number and are today much harder to find in the sources. But they may still be there if we know where to look.

One extraordinary story is still surprisingly little known – and it takes us back to Abbot Hadrian of Canterbury. Writing in 731, Bede describes Hadrian as a "vir natione Afir", "a man of African race". Bede's description does not necessarily make Hadrian a black African; all we know for sure is that he was a late Roman north African, hailing from Libya. But Hadrian himself seems to have emphasised his African origins. Perhaps then he was in part Berber or Amazigh?

We can hear Hadrian's voice in the commentaries – recalling the grandeur of the late Roman palaces of Libya, or ruminating on the warlike Arabs of his day. As a leading light in one of the most important educational movements in English history – a man who taught in Britain for more than 40 years – a strong case can be made for him being the most important African in our history.

Badly kept peace

Hidden histories, surprising histories, new histories… the period in which Hadrian, Penda and Wynflaed called England home is a truly fascinating and creative one, and never has there been a more exciting time to study it. Anglo-Saxon burials and treasures, Viking hoards, and newly identified manuscripts have combined to produce a richer, more varied and more inclusive view of life in early England.

We can see it now as one of the most thrilling eras in the history of Britain: the beginnings of the English language and literature, of English law and (in the case of Æthelstan's huge "national" assemblies) the parliamentary system. We can even listen in on Æthelstan in council, admitting his failures: "I am sorry that our peace is so badly kept and my councillors say I have borne it for too long." Here, then, are the roots of the English state, and even of civil society.

Given all this – the sheer colour and variety of early medieval England – you may be asking yourself why I decided to retain the term "the Dark Ages" in the title of the book? The shape of the original version was determined by a series of television films, with a title that referenced a period that can only be described as loose, beginning as it did in the Roman period and

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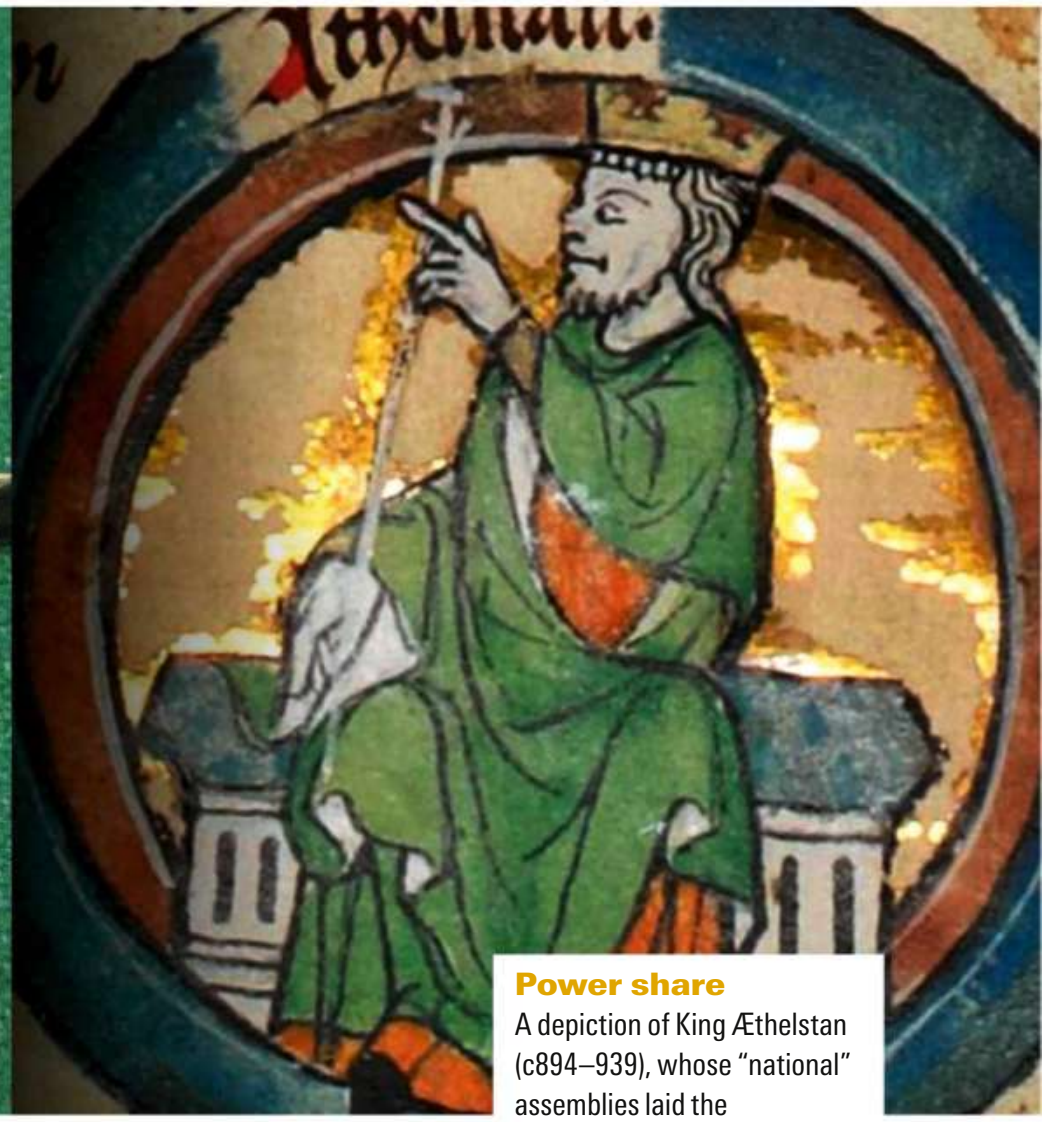


Power share
A depiction of King Æthelstan (c894–939), whose "national" assemblies laid the groundwork for England's parliamentary system

FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

ending with the Norman conquest. The title chosen was of a kind beloved of television producers rather than professional scholars, who rightly frown on such generalisations. But the phrase "Dark Ages" is worth a moment's pause.

As early as the eighth century, the English scholar Alcuin, in the court of Charlemagne, spoke of the light coming out of late Roman Africa, Italy and the eastern Mediterranean, illuminating the darkness of Britain after the fall of Rome.

The actual term "Dark Ages" probably didn't emerge for another five centuries, perhaps coined by the Italian poet Petrarch who, living in the sunlit optimism of early 14th-century Italy and Avignon, found the immediate post-Roman centuries dark and forbidding. Educated Renaissance people like him were naturally drawn to the light of the classical world, not the gloomy, obscure period that followed it.

It wasn't until the 18th-century European Enlightenment, however, that the phrase truly took hold in the historiography, describing a period when, in many places, the sources for history and society – and for people's lives – were virtually non-existent.

Perhaps then, if the "Dark Ages" has any use, it is when dealing with the fifth and sixth centuries, where we might retain it as a useful catch-all. In my rewrite, I have mostly removed the phrase, but I have kept the original title for continuity – and for sentimental reasons!

For all that's changed, when I sat down to write the new version of the book, I was driven by the same idea that motivated me 40 years ago: to tell the story of the emergence of the kingdom of the English before 1066 through the tales of some of the extraordinary people who lived in those times.

While the Welsh and Scots of course appear in the book, this is essentially the tale of the rise of England. One of its central themes is how the Old English peoples founded their societies on the Latin Christian culture of the Late Antique world, and how they were then transformed by the Carolingian humanism of Europe's first renaissance, which in turn shaped the character of the later Old English state.

It seems to me a timely reminder of the relevance of history. Britain's vote to leave the European Union in 2016 was, after all, driven by culture and a particular view of history – not, I would argue, by the realities of British power, economy and society – and it has been followed by an intense debate around the roots of English and British identity.

England is Britain's core state, and may be destined – perhaps quite soon – to return to its pre-17th-century existence as an independent kingdom. But the nature of its long history – including those formative six centuries following the end of Roman Britain – is still of great interest to all Britons, and indeed, to a wider world.

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. The 40th anniversary edition of his book *In Search of the Dark Ages* is out now, published by BBC Books

MASTERCLASS Discover more about the **women of the Middle Ages** in Janina Ramirez's HistoryExtra Masterclass. For more details, turn to page 80

The period in which Hadrian and Wynflaed called England home is a truly fascinating one

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

Were witches actually burned at the stake?

In songs, stories, horror films and detective fiction, the witch always burns. In continental Europe, people convicted of witchcraft certainly did burn: approximately 40,000 victims, the majority of them women, went to the stake between 1428 and 1782. Indeed, a German chronicler, writing in 1590 in the aftermath of a hunt, described the execution ground as looking "like a small wood from the number of stakes" driven into the earth.

Witchcraft was seen as an "exceptional" crime that struck at the foundations of society, Christian belief and governance. As such, it demanded exceptional punishment. Death by fire, previously reserved for heretics, suggested ritual purification and destroyed any hope of a bodily resurrection for the accused at the Last Judgment. The punishment was intended to terrify and obliterate a witch in both the present and the hereafter.

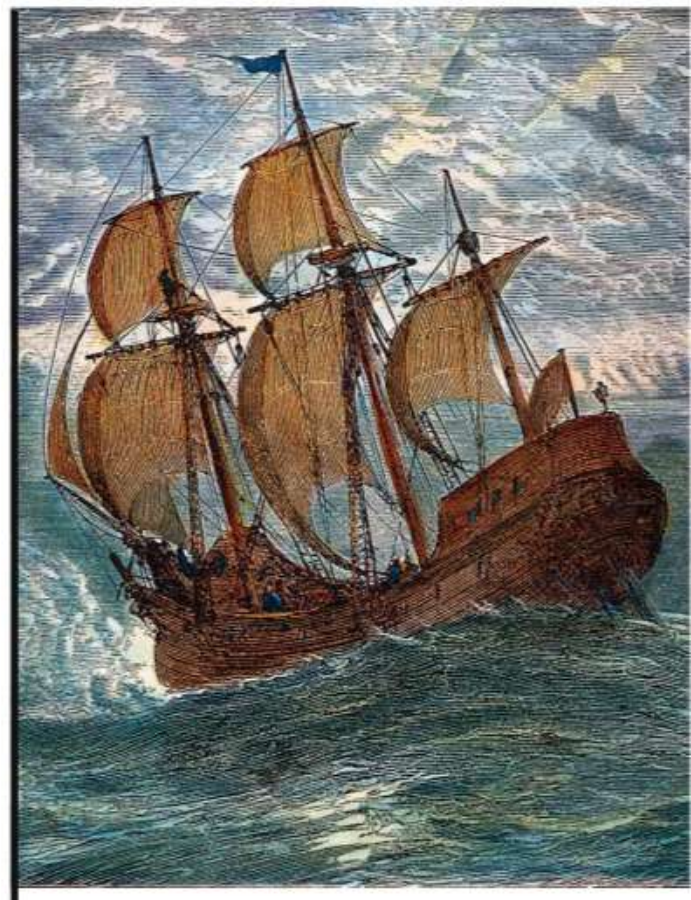
However, this picture requires some important qualifications. In France, the German princely states, Scotland and Switzerland, the "witch" was usually strangled before the flames took hold. And in Sweden, "witches" were beheaded before being burned.

Conversely, in England – as in North America – where cases were tried as felonies in secular courts, those convicted did not burn but were hanged. The English legislation of 1542, 1563 and 1604 focused upon harmful magic – where people, crops or animals had been allegedly damaged by magic – rather than on putting suspects on trial for expressly concluding a pact with the devil. This, combined with the refusal to sanction judicial torture, acted as brakes on large-scale hunts.

Not that this came as much consolation to the "Bideford witches", who, in 1683, became the last women to hang in England. They died at the very moment that Newtonian physics, the politics of Locke, and judicial scepticism promised the dawning of a new age based not upon fear and hatred but upon hope and human reason.

John Callow, author of *The Last Witches of England* (Bloomsbury, 2021)

Women accused of witchcraft are burned at the stake in Derneburg, Germany, in a 1555 engraving. This fate was common in continental Europe – but, in England and North America, "witches" were hanged instead



The *Mayflower* on its 1620 voyage to North America. After it returned to England, the ship met a decidedly unglamorous end

What happened to the *Mayflower* after it carried the Pilgrims to North America in 1620?

Mayflower was a common name for ships in the 17th century, occurring repeatedly in port books, so historians must be careful that any ship they find with this name is in fact the same one that took the Pilgrims to North America. This particular *Mayflower* had been used to transport all kinds of popular goods including wine, salt, wool and hats. After its journey to the New World, it appears to have sat in the Thames.

Following the death of Christopher Jones, the ship's part-owner, the *Mayflower* was broken up. It is not known with certainty what became of the timbers, though it's been suggested that planks purchased from a yard in Rotherhithe, used by one Thomas Russell to extend a barn in Buckinghamshire, came from the vessel. Whether or not that's true, the story has certainly drawn eager tourists to the barn in the village of Jordans.

James Evans, author of *Emigrants: Why the English Sailed to the New World* (W&N, 2017)

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

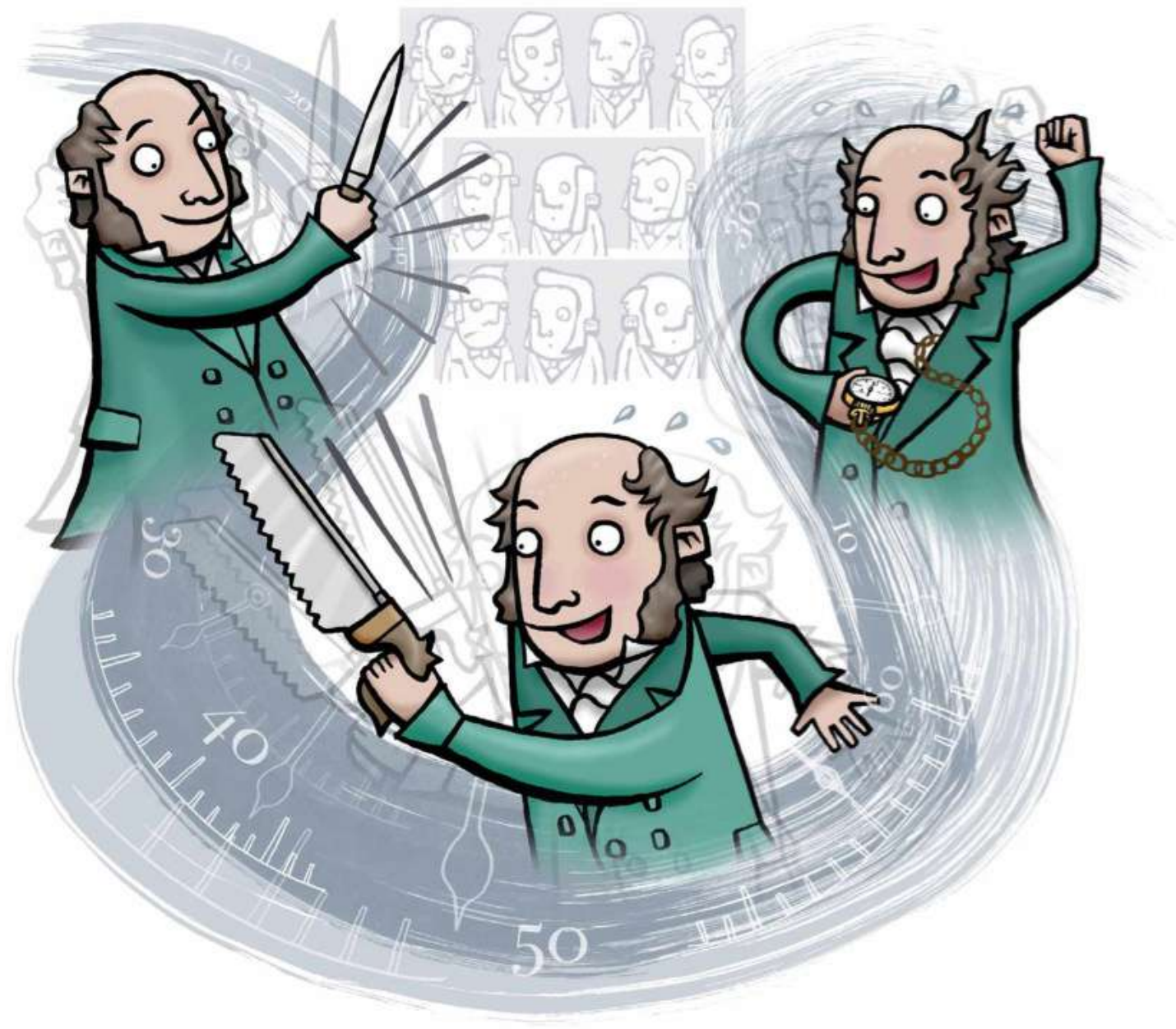


ILLUSTRATION BY **@GLENMCILLUSTRATION**

Is it true that a surgeon called Robert Liston somehow achieved a 300 per cent mortality rate?

In the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, a surgeon called Robert Liston, working at a London hospital, developed a considerable reputation. During one infamous incident he was reportedly amputating a patient's leg when his flaying knife accidentally removed his assistant's fingers. The patient died from an infection, as did the sorry assistant, and someone watching the operation died from shock after Liston's knife slashed the poor man's coat-tails. It remains the only operation in surgical history with a 300 per cent mortality rate.

The problem with this story is that it probably isn't true. The only evidence that the episode ever happened comes from a book called *Great Medical Disasters*, written in 1983 by Richard Gordon (1921–2017). However, no primary sources confirm that Liston's operation ever took place. Gordon was more a fan of fiction than fact.

Despite its dubious provenance, this story appears everywhere: in medical journals, in history books, and in every biography of Liston ever written. As an anecdote, it contributes to the general idea that surgery in the 19th century was cruel, dramatic and bloody, and that surgeons were emotionally detached – even barbaric.

The real story is a lot more complicated than most people assume. Surgeons in the 19th century were often deeply moved by their patients' pain, and there's little evidence to suggest that Liston was more concerned with speed than suffering. Stories such as this one may be gory and sensationalist, helping to sell a lot of books, but they don't accurately represent the surgeons of Liston's generation. Richard Gordon has a lot to answer for!

Agnes Arnold-Forster, historian of medicine and research fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

GETTY IMAGES

DID YOU KNOW...?

Gnome comforts

The man most responsible for the introduction of garden gnomes into Britain believed in the existence of real gnomes. Sir Charles Isham, a Northamptonshire land-owner, began to purchase terracotta figurines for his extensive garden from a German company in the 1840s. Isham was also a spiritualist who was convinced that such creatures as gnomes existed. He admitted that "the nature of gnomes is at present very obscure" – but, he wrote, "seeing such things is no… indication of mental delusion."

Bulletproof brass

When American murderer James W Rodgers, facing execution by firing squad in 1960, was asked if he had a last request, he replied: "A bulletproof vest." Rodgers had been working at a mine in Utah in 1957 when he argued with miner Charles Merrifield and shot him to death. After being convicted of murder, he was offered a choice of execution: by hanging or firing squad. He chose the latter – but his final request was denied.

Artistic ass

Sunset Over the Adriatic (inset) – attributed to a Genoese artist called Joachim Raphaël Boronali, and exhibited and sold in Paris in 1910 – was actually the work of a donkey. Writer Roland Dorgelès, a critic of contemporary art movements, invented Boronali, describing him as an exponent of "excessivism". He created the picture by tying a paintbrush to the tail of a donkey belonging to the owner of his favourite cafe, and encouraging the beast to swish it back and forth over a canvas. H

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

RUSSIA'S DOOM

With the world's attention fixed firmly on the invasion of Ukraine, **Antony Beevor's** new history of Russia's 1917 revolutions and subsequent civil war is especially timely. He explains to **Rob Attar** how the fall of the last tsar launched a chain of events leading to millions of deaths and one of history's most brutal dictatorships

ON THE EH PODCAST

Death of the old order
Victims of the February Revolution are carried through the Field of Mars in Petrograd (now St Petersburg). This was the first of two revolutions in 1917, sparking a bloody civil war that racked Russia for several years

ED REVOLUTION

AKG-IMAGES

IN CONTEXT

REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR

The Russian Revolution was actually two revolutions. The first began when **the last tsar, Nicholas II, was toppled in March 1917**, brought down by a combination of food shortages, Russia's disastrous performance in the First World War and his personal failings. With his fall, Russia seemed set for a democratic future but, until elections could be held, **the country was ruled by a Provisional Government** dominated by liberals from the tsarist-era Duma (parliament).

The Provisional Government, its effectiveness hampered by a lack of legitimacy, faced a powerful rival in the shape of the **socialist-led Petrograd Soviet** that ruled the country's then-capital city (now called St Petersburg). The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, sought to undermine the Provisional Government, which itself made a series of missteps – notably continued failures in the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Capitalising on these weaknesses, **the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Leon Trotsky launched a coup d'état,** the so-called October Revolution, seizing power with relative ease. Consolidating that power proved far more difficult, as a combination of opponents – ranging from former tsarist generals to other leftwing political groups who distrusted the Bolsheviks – took up arms against them.

The stage was set for **a civil war between the Bolshevik Red Army and their "White" enemies** that devastated the country and led to millions of deaths. Several international powers also contributed troops and supplies to the conflict, predominantly to the Bolsheviks' opponents. In 1919, White armies led by Generals Kolchak and Denikin launched offensives that seemed set to destroy the fledgling communist regime, but **the Red Army managed to repel them**. Following those triumphs the Bolsheviks were eventually able to achieve ultimate victory, though fighting continued for many more months.

Rob Attar: Most of your previous books have focused on the Second World War. What made you decide to head back 20 years earlier for this one?

Antony Beevor: The most important thing for me was to understand the chain of disasters of the 20th century – the impacts of which actually are still with us today, as we see in Ukraine. Around 12 million people died in the Russian Civil War. This wanton destruction created a terrible fear among the middle classes, but also galvanised the left – the Bolsheviks and other communists – and marked the start of a vicious circle of rhetoric that developed, above all, in the 1930s. This is really what dominates the whole of the 20th century, yet I think that the Russian Civil War is not understood well enough.

This book was always going to be a tremendous challenge, and was made possible almost entirely by the wonderful research done by my great Russian colleague, Lyuba Vinogradova, over the past five years.

What new insights have emerged from the work that you and Lyuba have done over these past few years?

What has stood out is the sheer horror of the civil war. There's a savagery and a sadism that is very hard to comprehend; I'm still mulling it over and trying to understand it. It was not just the build-up of hatred over centuries but a vengeance that seemed to be required. It went beyond the killing; there was also the sheer, horrible inventiveness of the tortures inflicted on people. We need to look at the origins of the civil war: who started it, and was it avoidable? But one also needs to see the different patterns seen in the "Red Terror" [the campaign of political repression and violence carried out by the Bolsheviks] and the "White Terror" [the violence perpetrated by that side in the war] – and consider the question: why are civil wars so much crueller, so much more savage than state-on-state wars?

How much was the Red Terror being centrally directed by the Bolsheviks, and to what extent did it emerge from the chaos of war?

Well, a lot of it obviously did emerge from the chaos of war. Even the Cheka [Soviet secret police], under the command of Felix Dzerzhinsky, never really controlled many of its local agents who committed some of the worst atrocities.

But also – as with, say, Franco and the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War – a smaller party trying to control areas where they're in a tiny minority will often resort to terror, simply to make up for the lack of numbers. This was very much the case with Lenin, who was determined to crush opposition to the "Great Revolution" – actually a coup d'état. From Lenin's point of view, therefore, the Red Terror was something that was essential right from the beginning.

For a few months following the overthrow of the tsar in early 1917, Russia was ruled by a liberal Provisional Government, with the potential for democracy. Why was this so short-lived?

There was a fundamental political problem. The Russian writer Alexander Herzen talked about the "pregnant widow" – the idea that when one regime has fallen, there's a very dangerous interregnum before a new regime emerges. The Russian Provisional Government was in an impossible position. It was essentially liberal, but merged with socialists from the Petrograd Soviet in an attempt to hold together a country that was obviously split.

The whole administration, both in the countryside and in the towns, had disappeared. Members of the police, the most hated of all of the tsarist institutions, had to flee for their lives. In the countryside, particularly, peasants and soldiers returning from the front would loot every alcohol store and every distillery they could find. They would then would start burning and smashing up the estates and the landowners' manor houses.

This was exactly what Lenin and the Bolsheviks needed. The upsurge of chaotic violence was actually bulldozing a way through for the Bolsheviks to seize power, because the liberals were incapable of doing anything about it. The levers of power were attached to no forces of power. All the government could do was to say: "Well,

What stands out is the sheer horror of the Russian Civil War. The savagery and sadism is hard to comprehend

Riding to victory
A 1919 propaganda poster exhorts workers and peasants to enrol in the Red Cavalry fighting White forces during the Russian Civil War – which claimed around 12 million lives

Driving force
Members of the Petrograd City Militia surround an armoured vehicle. They had replaced the tsarist police after the February Revolution as the old order in Russia crumbled

AKG-IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

Gunning down dissent
Protesters scatter as troops of the Provisional Government open fire with machine guns in July 1917. That month witnessed several demonstrations against the Provisional Government, known as the July Days

Old guard
Officers of the White Army. Former tsarist-era officers in the White faction treated neighbouring powers arrogantly and were frequently anti-Semitic, causing tensions with allies

we can't take any decisions until the new, democratic constituent assembly has come together." There was frustration with the lack of decision-making – which, of course, increased the power of the Bolsheviks, simply because they were seen to be the only ones who were in a position to really force through change. Of course, nobody knew what those changes were going to be, because Lenin had kept his plans very quiet.

Even then, Lenin was really the only one within the Bolshevik party who actually believed that a coup was possible. Even Trotsky was nervous. What Lenin perceived – and he was absolutely right – was that the success of a coup depends on the apathy of the majority, not on how many real supporters you have. Trotsky estimated that, within the huge garrison in and around Petrograd, there were probably only a couple of thousand who were active Bolshevik supporters, and about 140,000 who were uncertain. But those people weren't prepared to do anything to save the Provisional Government – so, with a tiny minority, the Bolsheviks were able to seize power.

Once the Bolsheviks had taken power in November 1917, how revolutionary was the government that they installed?

Even many Bolsheviks were shocked by Lenin's extremism. His new government abolished the police and the army, replacing them with Red Guards from the factories, and absolutely everything was nationalised. This course of action wasn't apparent beforehand, and – not surprisingly – many of the civil servants didn't want to work with the new government.

That was when the paranoia started, and Lenin decided to bring in the Cheka. He even accused the bourgeoisie of somehow sabotaging food supplies. Actually, though, the bourgeoisie had virtually no control over food supplies at all. In fact, a lot of the food supply issues had been caused by problems with the railways and the lack of rolling stock. In the earlier part of the year, Russia had perfectly good food reserves, but many of those had been wrecked during that chaotic summer, when there was a lack of planting and other work undertaken on the farms. That marked the start of a downward cycle, and every measure that the Bolsheviks instituted to try to grab food from the peasants to give to the cities only made the situation worse.

Was civil war inevitable after the Bolshevik revolution?

Lenin actually wanted the civil war. He said: "Civil war is the sharpest form of the class struggle." In his view, it was the only way for the Bolsheviks to take power. The other

GETTY IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Faces of communism

Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, pictured during the turbulent months of 1917 when Russia's government was overthrown twice

socialist parties – the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks – were horrified by his plans because they knew that after he had smashed the liberal and conservative parties, he would turn on them – and he certainly did. Lenin despised anybody who disagreed with him, even – especially – within his own party. The less-extreme members who warned against this complete seizure of power, this total dictatorship that Lenin was planning, were either more or less rejected from the party or kept in a kind of subservient position.

The Bolsheviks didn't have the support of the majority of people around the country at the time of the revolution. Didn't that put them at a serious disadvantage once the civil war began?

It put them at a serious disadvantage in certain areas, and there were uprisings against the communists immediately after the coup d'état of November 1917 [called the October Revolution, based on the use of the old Julian calendar in Russia]. However,

Lenin despised anybody who disagreed with him, even – especially – within his own party

what's interesting is how few of the White officers in Petrograd, Moscow and many other places actually joined the revolt against the communists at that stage. I think they were all so dispirited and demoralised by everything that had happened that most of them had sunk into apathy. But yes, there were certain areas where there were very strong reactions against the Bolsheviks. And that early part of the civil war, in the winter of 1917–18, showed that the outcome largely depended on what happened in local areas. It was a geographically fragmented civil war that was taking place across the whole of the landmass.

How important to the outcome of the war was the fragmentation and disunity of the Whites compared with the centralisation and unity of the Bolsheviks?

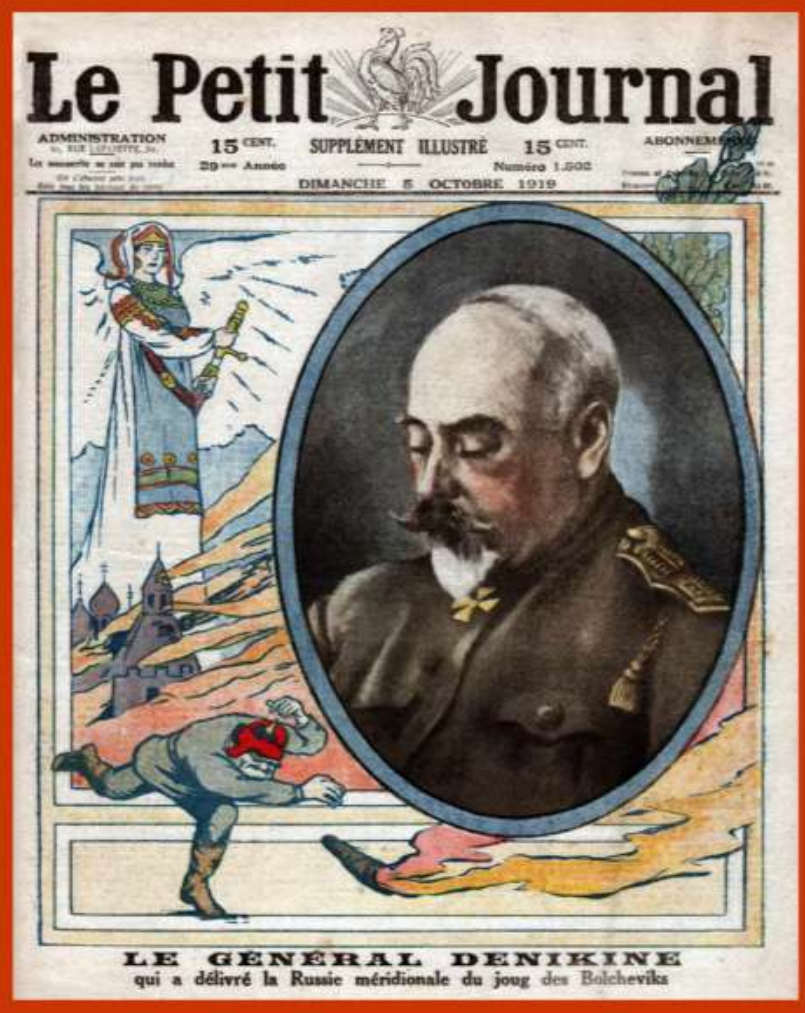
This is absolutely central to an understanding of the war. When one talks of the Whites, one automatically thinks of the forces led by former generals and commanders from the tsarist army. But there were also Socialist Revolutionaries who were appalled by the dictatorship that had been created in Petrograd, and they made uneasy alliances with groups of White officers.

There was always going to be tension right from the start, because most of these White officers were anti-Semitic – and there were many Jews in the Socialist Revolutionaries and other socialist parties. White officers also wanted to bring back the punishments used by the tsarist army, which meant that they would be allowed to punch soldiers in the face on a summary charge, whip them using rifle-cleaning rods, things like that. Of course, this created a terrible tension the whole time.

These problems created by the Whites also applied to their relationships with possible allies such as the Finns, the Baltic States and the Poles later on. If those powers had combined, they could well have defeated the communists. Along the whole of that western frontier, from Finland all the way down through to Ukraine and the Donbas, they had a tremendous advantage, with trained troops that were extremely effective. However, the White generals were arrogant, basically telling the Finns, the Estonians and so on that they were still part of the Russian empire – insulting all of their nationalist aspirations.

This was almost as unpopular as the Whites' appalling social policies towards the peasants. The tsarists wanted to get all their land back from the peasants, which of course was going to create a tremendous hatred and fear; as a result, there was almost continual war. The Whites had no proper administration; all they were interested in was taking

Allied assistance
British soldiers operate a gun alongside White army troops near Archangel in 1919, during the civil war against Bolshevik forces. Russia's former First World War allies, including Britain, provided weapons and support for the White cause



Victor to vanquished
French newspaper *Le Petit Journal* lauds White Army general Anton Denikin for "delivering southern Russia from the yoke of the Bolsheviks" in early October 1919. Within weeks he was decisively defeated, marking a turning point in the civil war

SHUTTERSTOCK/ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

On the breadline
Russian children queue for bread during the civil war. The chaos that followed the 1917 revolutions, and resulting economic and infrastructure problems, led to serious food shortages

what they could from these local areas, including food – which in many cases they did not pay for.

Many international powers lined up on the side of the White army. Why were they not able to affect the outcome of the conflict?
Their commitment was unclear, and this was always the problem: they couldn't make up their own minds. In the early part of 1919, US president Woodrow Wilson thought that some form of peace could be achieved in Russia, and suggested a conference to be held in the Princes' Islands lying in the Sea of Marmara close to Constantinople [now Istanbul]. However, the Whites were so furious at the Reds and what had happened up till then – the murders of the aristocracy, the destruction and so on – that they refused to sit down with the Reds. And Lenin and the Bolsheviks – who at that stage thought that they were going to win the war – had no intention of taking part themselves.

Earlier on, Russia's First World War Allies agreed to provide a certain amount of help to the White cause in the form of weaponry. Now, you can provide weapons and you can provide supplies, but you've got to be able to get them to their destination – and, until the First World War came to an end in November 1918, the Allies didn't have access through the Dardanelles and therefore couldn't supply the Cossacks and Denikin's White armies in the south of Russia.

Some supplies were brought in through the far north – through Murmansk, where the British already had a base, and Archangel, with some marines who'd landed in 1918 to protect the supplies delivered there. Then, in the far east, the Japanese started to land huge numbers of troops. At one stage Japan had almost 70,000 troops in Siberia. The Americans also sent in the equivalent of a small division of troops as part of an expeditionary force.

The British eventually landed only a couple of battalions – of the Middlesex Regiment and the Hampshire Regiment. But there were also Italians, there were Serbs, there were Greeks and then the French, who came into Odessa and into the Black Sea region. But this actually proved to be a disaster, because so many of their troops were politicised and were much more sympathetic towards the Bolsheviks than they were towards their own officers.

How was the Red Army eventually able to triumph over their White opponents?
The Reds had a huge advantage with internal lines. They were based in one of the most populous areas of central-western Russia,

Siege mentality
A c1920 poster depicts Soviet Russia as a "camp under siege". Widespread support among the world's great powers was not enough to secure victory for the Whites

between the Volga and roughly the Polish frontier. They had some of the largest cities and many of the factories, particularly the arms factories.

That matter of internal lines proved incredibly important, especially when it came to the crucial moments. There were times when the Bolsheviks themselves thought that they'd lost the civil war, and were almost preparing to abandon Moscow.

In early 1919, for example, there was a sudden advance by the White General Kolchak's troops all the way to the Volga. The trouble was that the great advance of General Denikin from the south did not coincide with that – and by the time Denikin's march on Moscow started, Kolchak's advance was in full retreat.

Denikin's advance initially went well, and there were moments when Trotsky and others in the Red camp really thought that they were facing defeat. But, because the Red Army no longer had to worry about Kolchak's troops to the east, they were able to reinforce their troops facing Denikin. October 1919 saw a complete turnaround – the final turning point, if you like, in the war.

Churchill [then British secretary of state for war] couldn't believe what had happened. He was sending signals to General Holman, commander of the British military mission, saying: "I can't believe this. The Reds were in full retreat, and now suddenly they seem to be beating the Whites on every front. What's happened?" He'd failed to understand that it was purely because the Bolsheviks had reinforced that eastern front at a crucial moment, then – with the advantage of their internal lines – been able to bring troops back very rapidly to transform the whole situation.

Some of the places that were fought over during the civil war have recently been battlegrounds in the current conflict in Ukraine. How far, if at all, did the Russian civil war prefigure the events of today?
The Russian Civil War was really the moment when Ukraine started to develop a more modern nationalism. There was already a Ukrainian culture in the countryside, in its poetry and in a lot of its literature. But at this time they really did want to take Ukraine forward, to create a completely different state – and they'd been given the opportunity.

This is what Putin has been raging about: it was Lenin who almost gave up Ukraine at that stage. The Bolsheviks thought that allowing a certain amount of autonomy or independence to these former nation states of the Russian empire would cause no problems, because the forthcoming world revolution would bring those states back under communist control – and that's where they made their great mistake. H

The Russian Civil War marked the moment when Ukraine started to develop a more modern nationalism

Antony Beevor is a world renowned historian and author who has written numerous bestselling books, primarily on the Second World War. His new book, *Russia: Revolution and Civil War 1917–1921*, was published by Orion in May

MORE FROM US Listen to an extended version of this interview with Antony Beevor on our **podcast** at *historyextra.com/podcast*

LISTEN Melvyn Bragg and historians **discuss Lenin** on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* at *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00546pv*

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BBC at 100 PART 7

Into the wild

From its earliest days, the BBC set out to chronicle the natural world – an ambition that, as **DAVID HENDY** explores, reached new heights from the late 1970s with David Attenborough's string of wildlife blockbusters

ON THE ET PODCAST

Creature features
Michaela and Armand Denis, whose televised safaris during the 1950s and 60s were often highly sentimental in tone

> "*Life on Earth* marked the inauguration of a long lineage of epic wildlife series fronted by Attenborough for the BBC"

At ten past eight in the evening on Tuesday 16 January 1979, British viewers were invited to embark on the opening stage of what would turn out to be one of the most spectacular and ground-breaking journeys in British television history.

The 50-minute programme was advertised in *Radio Times* as the start of an ambitious attempt across 13 weekly episodes to explore "the incredible variety of living things, and fossils, which throw light on the ancestry of life". The series was called *Life on Earth*, its presenter David Attenborough. It decisively announced not only a new phase in natural history TV but the beginning of a decades-long era in which the BBC and, in particular its own Natural History Unit, would become a dominant player in the global broadcasting marketplace.

In some respects, *Life on Earth* started rather *un*spectacularly. Since this was the story of evolution, the first episode was largely about single-cell organisms. The next featured sea snails and shrimps. In fact, the series would be more than halfway through before it served up that familiar medley of giant lizards, lions and zebras that viewers of natural history had come to expect. Nevertheless, only two episodes in, the renowned critic Clive James was writing in the *Observer* of watching "enthralled… Slack-jawed with wonder and respect". Nor was he alone.

Such was the startling intimacy of those first images of translucent floating amoebas that millions of other viewers around the country were also glued to their sofas. By the penultimate episode, which featured Attenborough in an extraordinary unscripted sequence sitting on a Rwandan mountainside being caressed by gorillas and whispering to camera about the "mutual understanding" between them, the *Observer* critic was reaching new heights of ecstasy. This, James wrote, was stunning proof that television could be an "instrument of revelation". Here too, he suggested, was perhaps the clearest example yet of the BBC's "collective genius" for creating blockbusters.

For James, Attenborough was undoubtedly crucial to the series' success: he was the arch-communicator, deeply knowledgeable about science yet able to convey complex ideas through simple statements. Yet the sheer quality of the BBC's film footage – "so magnificent that it would have been inconceivable even a decade ago" – struck him as equally important. What viewers witnessed in the opening months of 1979 was the result not of one man's efforts but of team intelligence: *Life on Earth* marked the inauguration of a long and distinguished lineage of epic wildlife series fronted by Attenborough for the BBC. It was also the culmination of more than half a century of broadcast professionals busily working out how to feature animals on air in a way that was both entertaining and scientifically sound. When it came to natural history broadcasting, the Corporation had its own evolutionary story to tell.

The birth of a genre

Back in the 1920s, for instance, the BBC's Savoy Hill studios had often been filled with pets and other readily available creatures. Two widely publicised programmes from 1924 featured the "Great Howl" from a rescue dog named George, in which young listeners to *Children's Hour* were invited to report on their own pets' reactions at home, and a live "Zoo Concert" from Regent's Park in London, featuring jackasses, a hyena and a walrus.

Eight years later, when experimental television transmissions began, animals were being given top billing almost as frequently as the singers, dancers and musical hall artistes. Parrots, hornbills, toucans, a boa constrictor, a Capuchin monkey and even an alligator were among those hauled before the cameras to do a quick turn. There was, as one eyewitness of these pioneering years recalled,

GETTY IMAGES

A deeper understanding
David Attenborough in a famous scene from 1979's *Life on Earth*. The series marked the start of a new era in British natural history television

a considerable degree of chaos behind the scenes. There was sometimes a touch of subterfuge, too. One favourite among viewers, a juggling act in which a "goldfish" in a bowl was balanced precariously on the top of a billiard cue, actually involved the use of a cut-up carrot.

When television returned after the war, two of the most familiar faces on British screens were those of Armand and Michaela Denis, who would be seen setting off on safari at regular intervals. Their approach was sentimental and anthropomorphic, with one BBC insider dismissing it as "husband-and-wife-venturing-into-the-deepest-darkest-Africa stuff". Even *Zoo Quest*, launched in 1954 and featuring a young David Attenborough and a London Zoo curator bringing a variety of snakes, birds and lizards from the undergrowth of New Guinea or Madagascar back to the studio to accompany an informative talk, still had the faint air of a Victorian animal-capturing expedition about it.

By 1973, when Attenborough was emerging from almost a decade toiling away in the upper reaches of BBC management and eager to return to the frontline of programme-making, it felt as if a more challenging approach was needed. Two recent TV series, 1969's *Civilisation*, presented by Kenneth Clark, and 1973's *The Ascent of Man*, presented by Jacob Bronowski, had shown what could be achieved when lengthy slices of airtime were committed to the detailed exploration of a chosen subject by a leading expert in the field.

More significantly, perhaps, there had been a revolution in the BBC's own technical capabilities and zoological knowledge in the two decades since *Zoo Quest* had first aired. The Natural History Unit, which had started rather modestly back in the 1950s inside the BBC's West Region based in Bristol, had been growing steadily in size, expertise and reputation. It meant that as he began setting out his plans for a grand series about evolution, Attenborough knew he would be able to draw on a large network of scientifically literate producers, researchers, sound recordists and film-makers.

BBC ARCHIVE/ALAMY

Kenneth Clark during the filming of 1969's *Civilisation*, which acted as a template for the BBC's wildlife series

The promise of an unprecedented £1m budget to meet above-the-line costs, as well as extra money from the American company Warner Brothers, soon helped seal the deal.

The pursuit of excellence

Over the years of its creation, the scale of the production effort for *Life on Earth* had to keep pace with the scale of its presenter's ambition. Since Attenborough wanted the story of evolution to drive the whole shape of the series, and for his argument to be illustrated not by an endless sequence of fossils in museums but by shots of living creatures out in the world, crews had to be dispatched to all points of the compass. Attenborough's determination to talk about opposable thumbs led him and a production team to that mountainside in Rwanda; his reference to a coelacanth, a rare type of fish, required another crew to scour the ocean depths for the first, fleeting images of one of the most elusive creatures on Earth. Several sequences that demanded extra lighting or sustained close-ups were captured by an independent production company, Oxford Scientific Films, working with specially constructed studio sets. In the process, new lenses, new filmstock and new filming equipment all had to be developed.

The whole, fiendishly complicated process

was coordinated by a trio of senior producers at the Natural History Unit: Chris Parsons, John Sparks and Richard Brock. And it was the Natural History Unit that ensured that Attenborough's narration reflected the most up-to-date knowledge. Its researchers consulted more than 500 scientists and visited 183 different institutions around the world – the kind of ongoing dialogue that reassured the scientific community that the BBC would never set out to vulgarise or misrepresent their findings in this or any future series.

The high production values of *Life on Earth* were visible to all, and undoubtedly helped secure major international co-production deals for the BBC in the years ahead. As one BBC insider put it, it demonstrated the "idea of excellence being an end in itself". The series also established David Attenborough's personal reputation as the human embodiment of public service values – what one of his colleagues, Huw Wheldon, would have referred to as the BBC's mission to "make the good popular, and the popular good". Above all, *Life on Earth* showed the virtues of deep, sustained institutional knowledge – and the kind of magical, life-enhancing TV that could be made when different parts of a well-resourced broadcasting machine came together and clicked sublimely into place. H

David Hendy is emeritus professor at the University of Sussex. His latest book is *The BBC: A People's History* (Profile, 2022)

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Attenborough filming *Life on Earth*, 1979. The series established the reputation of both the presenter and the BBC's Natural History Unit

Beak performance
Woodpeckers such as these attracted a huge audience response when they featured in a 1954 BBC documentary

IN FOCUS

The woodpeckers that sparked a sensation

It was thanks largely to the producer and amateur bird-watcher, Desmond Hawkins, and a young studio manager, Tony Soper, that the BBC's West Region in Bristol built for itself an enviable reputation in the postwar period for specialising in natural history radio. But it was one of their most valued contacts in the bird-watching world who helped them launch into television.

In 1954, Peter Scott, who ran a wildfowl sanctuary in Slimbridge, near Gloucester, attended the International Ornithological Congress in Switzerland. On his return, he went straight to Hawkins: "You've got to see this film." While at the Congress he had seen 13 minutes of footage of woodpeckers recorded by the German naturalist Heinz Sielmann. What struck Scott as remarkable about Sielmann's film was his stunning use of close-ups, and the infrared technology that had allowed him to film *inside* a tree trunk.

The German was quickly signed up by the Bristol team, and his film screened on BBC Television. The next morning, there were so many phone calls from excited viewers that the BBC's switchboard became jammed. The extraordinary public response to the woodpecker film provided the nudge that BBC managers in London needed to invest extra resources in Bristol. The Natural History Unit was soon established.

Its first big TV series was *Look*, which began in 1955 and ran for over a decade. It was introduced by Peter Scott, and featured short films promising a "fly's eye" view of toads, foxes and other native species. Expertly recorded film footage remained in short supply, but over time a pool of camera operators and sound recordists was trained up. In 1957 *Faraway Look* was launched, showcasing filmed reports from abroad.

Two years later, to coincide with the centenary of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Scott and Soper hitched a ride to the Galapagos Islands, and returned with enough footage to fill seven half-hour episodes. Their pioneering location reports offered a tantalising foretaste of how television would tell the story of evolution through *Life on Earth* two decades later.

BBC ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

> "The film was remarkable due to its stunning use of close-ups and infrared technology"

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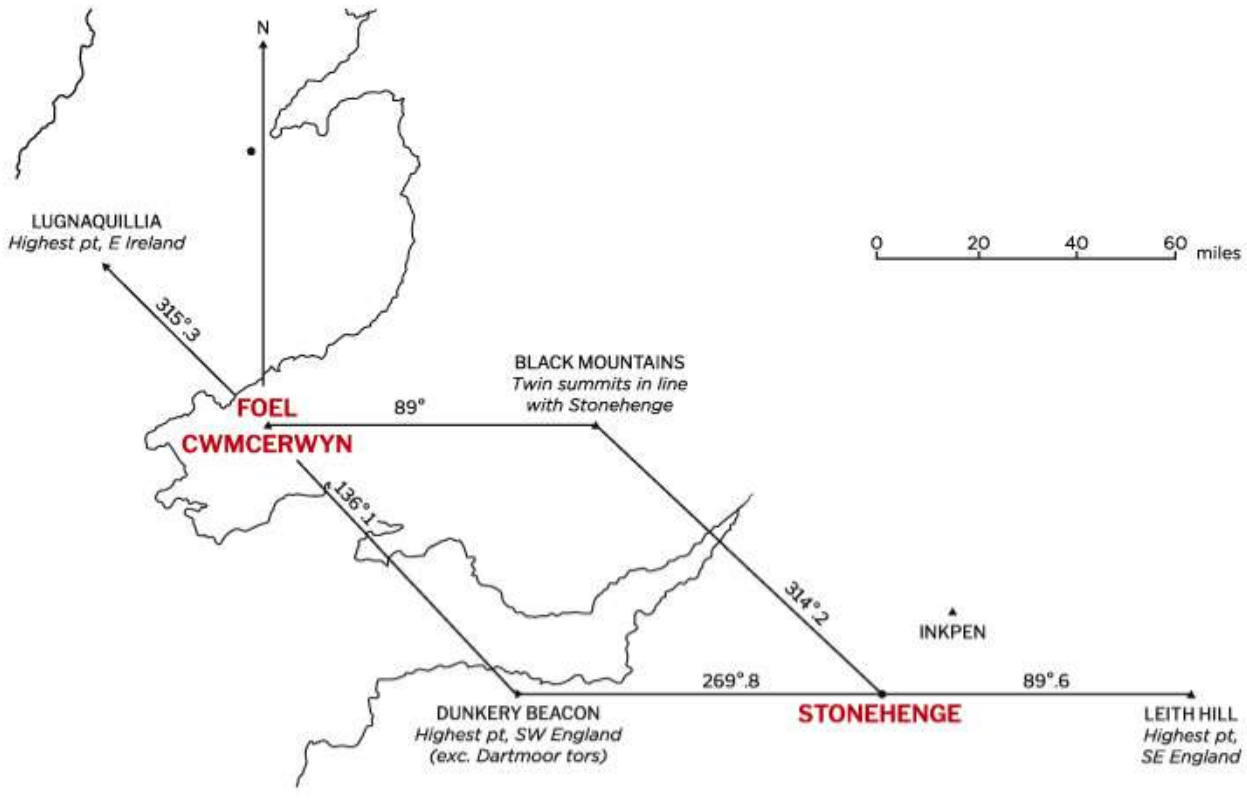
THE MEANING OF STONEHENGE

Hills and Directions are the Keys



Dr Garth Weston has spent four decades investigating the influence of landscape features and the major directions on the location and design of stone circles, henges and standing stones.

Regional surveys of these intriguing structures were published in **Monuments and Mountains (2007)** - a catalogue providing the topographical and inter-site relationships of over 1,600 monuments.

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Accessorising the past

We've added accoutrements to our outfits for centuries, from buckles to buttons – but they aren't just important for fashion's sake. **Cordula van Wyhe** and **Susan Vincent** reveal what six accessories can tell us about historical attitudes to gender, empire and more

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES/DREAMSTIME

Categorising accessories is tricky. Is the belt that holds up your jeans an accessory? What about your sunglasses, or your jewellery? We define the dress accessory as something that a person carries or wears, which supplements their garments. Accessories are often small and they can be highly decorative, but they have a practical function too.

These add-ons to our outfits work with the entire body from top to toe. Some, like buckles, have been with us unchanged for thousands of years. Others, like the phone case, appeared almost yesterday. Some were elite must-haves, but many were carried, manipulated, admired and enjoyed by the masses.

Accessories are the Cinderella of dress history, too often forgotten while their fancier sisters go to the ball. But in their own time these objects did influential things, and they connect with much broader ideas. Picking up an accessory reveals aspects of history in exciting new ways. Their raw materials show us global trade and sometimes global exploitation. Some accessories had the stamp of empire or were used to commemorate political ideas, like the patch box that featured the famous "Am I Not a Man and a Brother" anti-slavery design.

Enterprising manufacturers used the widespread circulation of other items as an opportunity for mass advertising. The accessory, though small in size, also gave form to gender roles and expectations, and new items – like the powder compact for instance – show these changing over time.

To modern eyes they are sometimes mystifying, but these once common objects have fascinating and important stories to tell.

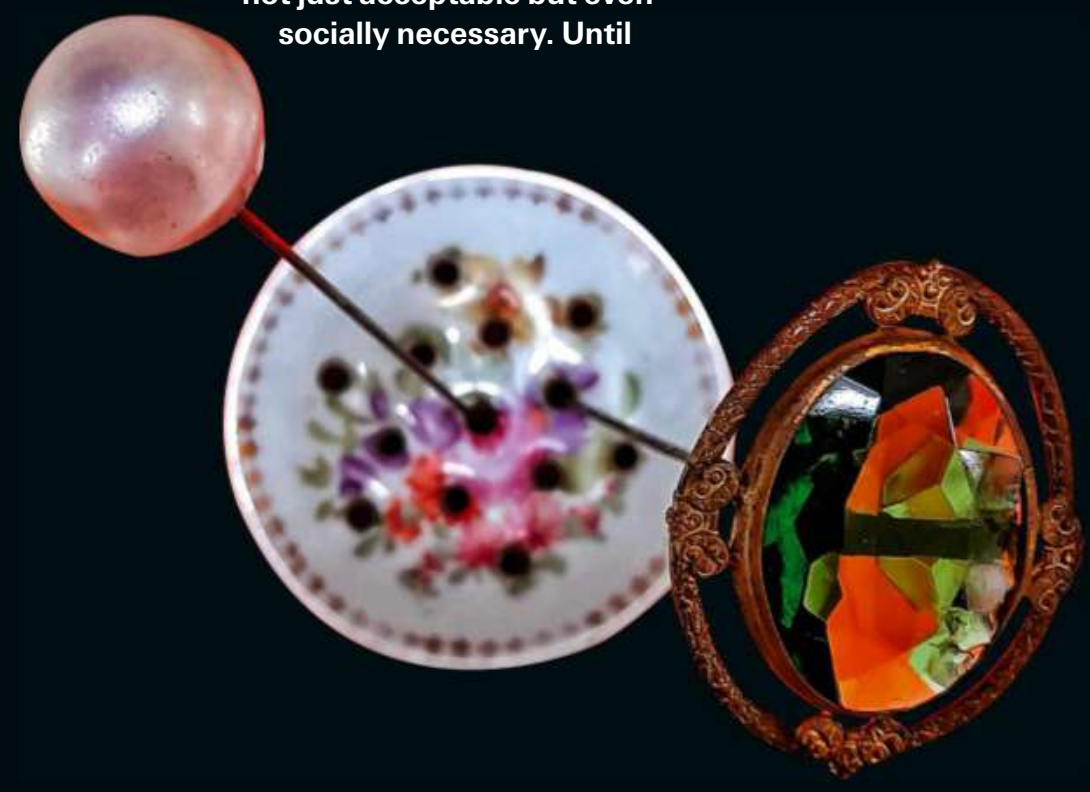
▲ FACING THE FUTURE

In the early 20th century makeup became socially respectable, as cosmetics were championed by "modern" women

This compact from the 1930s is bold, modern and stylish, just like the type of woman it was made for. In electric blue with gold-effect decoration, its design makes it look like a 35mm film camera – another new technology – but inside is a powder compact and a manicure etui case. Underneath the film rewind knob is a holder for lipstick.

Compacts emerged in the early 20th century, part of a revolution in women's style that saw cosmetics become not just acceptable but even socially necessary. Until then, wearing makeup was suggestive of immorality and was widely disapproved of.

This item takes what was once illicit and makes it desirable. Its portable nature celebrated women who were increasingly active outside the home, in leisure or work. Being in essence a small dressing table, the compact produced a further behavioural shift, allowing women to apply their cosmetics not only on the move, but in public too.



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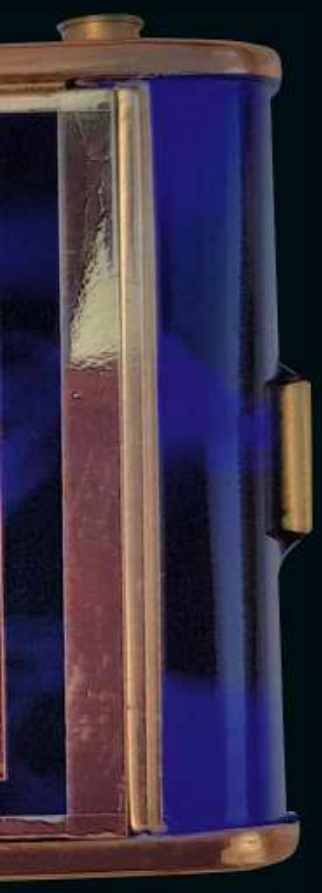

GOING MEDIEVAL

For nostalgic Victorians, the chatelaine evoked the romance of the past

Both pretty and practical, the chatelaine was designed to hang from the wearer's waist. It had a series of chains, each of which carried something useful or useless: things like sewing tools might hang interspersed with trinkets. A woman wearing a chatelaine would feel its weight and hear it moving with her.

Although the concept was centuries old, in the second half of the 1800s it rose to mass-produced popularity and featured things that were handy for everyday Victorian life: propelling pencils, note-takers, cases for spectacles or maybe magnifying glasses. The example pictured here has a thimble, an ivory note tablet, a propelling pencil, and a pin cushion.

This new take on an old accessory was also given a historical-sounding name: "chatelaine". Evoking the medieval lady of the castle who kept the keys, it celebrated an age-old practice of women's domestic skill and management. This accessory faced the present by looking to the past.

DANGEROUS DRESSING

Hat pins were feared as wicked weapons in the Edwardian era

Hat pins (such as the two pictured left, in a ceramic holder) became extremely long in the Edwardian period. A length of up to 30cm was needed to skewer a vast "picture" hat over the equally vast hair of its wearer, a fashionable updo that incorporated hair pieces (postiches) and padding.

The potential danger of hat pins, particularly on public transport or in crowded streets, was clear. Sometimes they caused accidental harm, but they could also be purposefully wielded as weapons. In 1908 Phyllis Thompson was arrested in Bootle, near Liverpool. Reprimanded by a police constable for being drunk and disorderly, she then stabbed him in the thigh with her hat pin.

The fear of hat-pin peril was much greater in the United States than in Britain, and there attempts were made to legislate against the longest of these accessories. It was also in the US that the hat pin was seen as an ever-ready weapon of self-defence for women, to be swiftly pulled from a hat and driven into an attacker's arm, leg or eye.

DMDA HANDLING COLLECTION

THE BIRTH OF BLING

With the arrival of artificial gemstones, both men and women embraced the sparkle

Jewellery made of flashing glass stones (called "paste") is as popular today as it was when these British-made shoe buckles were crafted in the 1780s. These buckles were designed as a sparkly fashion statement for a man.

The glass here is calibré cut. This means that all the "stones" are shaped to fit snugly together into standard mounts. Precious gemstones are treated differently, with their natural shape determining the cut and mount to reduce wastage.

The Alsatian jeweller Georg Friedrich Strass pioneered the paste imitation of diamonds in his Paris workshop in the 1730s. He used a range of chemical elements as well as metal foil bases to enhance and diversify colour and sparkle. Following his invention, glamorous accessories made of artificial gemstones became affordable for the masses. This is where bling began, in the mid-18th century. And these buckles show us that it was enjoyed by both women *and* men.

DMDA HANDLING COLLECTION

HOOKED ON A FEELING

Why the Victorians were gripped by button mania

Button hooks were ubiquitous in the Victorian world, helping men – and especially women – get in and out of their tightly fitted, highly buttoned garments. The button hooks below (dating from the 1870s to the 1930s) show the range of sizes and materials. The two largest ones on the left – made of silver and ebony – were used for boots, gaiters and spats. (These were buttoned spatter guards worn by both adults and children. Spats covered the instep and ankle; gaiters the entire lower leg and shoe.) The smaller examples – made from silver, various metals, Scottish agate, bone and guilloché enamel – were used for buttons on tight-fitting bodices or gloves.

Through these items we can imagine the physical sensations of being encased in unyielding garments, and the ritual of dressing and undressing before the age of Velcro and zips. They come from a past where being dressed properly and comfortably meant being able to feel the pressure of your clothes on every part of your body – a person in Victorian Britain would have felt comfortable in clothes we would regard as unacceptably restrictive today. Comfort is as much psychological as physical.

DMDA HANDLING COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

WHEN EAST MEETS WEST

Many 20th-century western designers took inspiration from across the seas

This belt buckle of Chinese styling dates to the 1920s. It is made of an early plastic in bright hues. The surface is imprinted with the rough hand-carved mould into which the liquid plastic was poured. The buckle – despite its modern material – conveys therefore the sense of traditional handwork.

It is also part of a much older fascination with eastern objects that dates back to the 18th century. Early 20th-century European and American designers borrowed from the imagery and techniques of Africa and Asia to forge new trends in the modernist styles of the west. The decorative arts, jewellery and fashion they created were imbued with the glamour of what was then seen as the exotic.

But this buckle illustrates that cultural borrowing was often only skin deep. The Chinese characters are of an ancient script unintelligible to modern readers, and may have been copied for their looks alone, or maybe even invented. At the time, a sense of exoticism could help to sell a mass-produced commodity. Yet this buckle may have been made in a small workshop specialising in artisan creation in plastic. It comes from a world where the machine and the handmade were less rigorously separated than today. H

Cordula van Wyhe is senior lecturer in the history of art at the University of York. **Susan Vincent** is a research fellow at the University of York. They are speaking at the in-person workshop 'Handling History: Exploring Dress Accessories' on 18 June, at the York Festival of Ideas. *yorkfestivalofideas.com*

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"People who created the transformations charted in the book were themselves transformed"

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"Pacifism wasn't for the faint-hearted, nor action exclusively reserved for soldiers"

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INTERVIEW

Lindsey Fitzharris discusses a First World War pioneer of plastic surgery › page 70

GETTY IMAGES

INTERVIEW / LINDSEY FITZHARRIS

"This was a time when losing a limb made you a hero, but losing a face made you a monster"

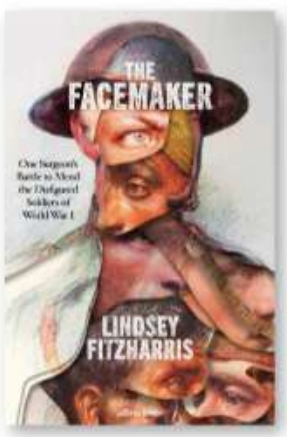
LINDSEY FITZHARRIS talks to Rhiannon Davies about her book on a pioneering plastic surgeon who rebuilt men's shattered faces during the First World War

ON THE EI PODCAST

Rhiannon Davies: Your book focuses on Harold Gillies, a surgeon in the First World War who made huge strides in facial reconstruction surgery. But how far back in history can we trace plastic surgery?

Lindsey Fitzharris: It pre-dates the First World War, so I don't want anyone to think that Harold Gillies is the father of plastic surgery as a whole. The term "plastic surgery" was coined in 1798. At that time, plastic meant something that you could mould and shape – so in this instance, a patient's skin or soft tissue. And attempts at early reconstruction of the face or to alter the appearance tended to focus on really small areas of the face. Rhinoplasty [reconstructing the nose] is one of the oldest surgical procedures on record, dating back to around 600 BC. It wasn't until the American Civil War that there were attempts to reconstruct the entire face, and even then it was quite limited.

How has facial disfigurement been viewed through history?
Disfigurement has been strongly associated with shame, because of its association with disease. Syphilis, which ravaged much of the world for centuries, caused "saddle nose", where the nose would cave in. People associated syphilis – and the disfigurement it caused – with a moral failing. The other thing was that sometimes someone would be purposely disfigured as a form of punishment: people's noses were injured purposefully for sexual transgressions such as prostitution or adultery. And this stigma really continues even to today. If you look at Hollywood movies a lot of villains are facially disfigured, like the Joker or the Phantom of the Opera, and that's a really lazy trope to say that the person is evil or has some kind of moral failing.



The Facemaker
by Lindsey Fitzharris
(Allen Lane, 336 pages, £20)

You write that there was a huge need for facial reconstruction during the First World War. Why was this?
Trench warfare led to sky-high rates of facial injuries – many combatants were shot in the face simply because they had no idea what to expect. One surgeon wrote: "They seemed to think they could pop their heads up over a trench and move quickly enough to dodge the hail of machine-gun bullets." Men were maimed, they were gassed, they were kicked in the face by horses. During the war, around 280,000 men from France, Britain and Germany alone suffered facial trauma.

This was a time when losing a limb made you a hero, but losing a face made you a monster to a society that was largely intolerant to facial differences. Whereas a prosthetic limb doesn't necessarily need to look like the arm or leg it's replacing, a face is an entirely different matter. Any surgeon willing to undertake the monumental task of reconstructing a soldier's face at this time not only had to consider the loss of function such as the inability to eat or to swallow, but they also had to consider the aesthetic, so that the face was deemed socially acceptable. As a result, plastic surgery flourished during the First World War, and was eventually ushered into the modern era by men like Harold Gillies.

How did Gillies first become involved in facial reconstruction?
Gillies was an ENT (ear, nose and throat) surgeon, and he volunteered to go over with the British Red Cross when the war broke out. He was introduced to facial reconstruction on the western front by a really amazing character called Charles Valadier. He was a French-American dentist who retrofitted his Rolls Royce with a dental chair and drove it to the front under a hail of bullets; I mean, he was an absolute legend.

So Gillies went back to Britain and petitioned to open his own specialty facial reconstruction unit at the Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot, and that's how it all began. Eventually he was so overwhelmed by the number of men needing his help that in 1917 he opened the Queen's Hospital, which later became Queen Mary's Hospital, in Sidcup – a hospital dedicated to facial reconstruction.

What was unique about his approach to facial reconstruction?
Gillies wasn't the only surgeon operating on faces in this period. There were people in other countries that were doing this – like Jacques Joseph, a Jewish-German surgeon working for the Germans – but they tended to work alone. They didn't bring on, for instance, dental technicians, who were actually really key in facial reconstruction.

Gillies was the opposite and recognised their importance from the start. He brought a dental surgeon called William Kelsey Fry into the Queen's Hospital, and really worked in tandem with him. While they were reconstructing a patient's jaw, for instance, Kelsey Fry would be working on aligning the teeth and the jaw and getting all of the prosthetics in place, and Gillies was working on the missing chunks from the face, and the soft tissues that were damaged. So it was really a team effort.

What other professions did Gillies collaborate with?
He also brought in artists, photographers, radiographers and mask makers, building a wonderful creative team who all worked towards

PROFILE

Lindsey Fitzharris is a medical historian, author and TV host. Her books include *The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine* (Allen Lane, 2017), and she is the writer and host of *The Curious Life and Death of…* for the Smithsonian Channel

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAMIEN MCFADDEN

rebuilding a soldier's face. One of the artists was Henry Tonks, who's quite famous in his own right, and he spent a lot of time at the Queen's Hospital drawing these men in the colours of the war, such as lurid greens and crimson reds [in doing so, Tonks provided a more vivid picture of their injuries than black-and-white photos]. The artists made diagrams of the surgeries, too, which proved hugely important.

How did mask-making fit into plastic surgery?
The masks were non-surgical solutions that were created by artists like the sculptor Anna Coleman Ladd, who worked out of a studio in Paris. And they're exquisite – when you look at them, it looks almost like a human face. But you have to remember that they are still unmovable. If you were sitting in front of someone wearing one of these masks, it could be a bit unsettling because the masks were expressionless; they couldn't operate like a face. They were also very uncomfortable to wear, they were fragile, they didn't age with the patient. So long-term, they weren't really a solution.

Gillies himself would employ masks, although he hated them because the masks reminded him of the limitations of what he was doing surgically. But sometimes when a patient was recovering – and it could take more than a decade to rebuild a soldier's face – perhaps they might want to wear a mask to go out into society and not be stared at.

How did the men react when they saw their injuries?
Gillies banned mirrors on the ward, under the guise of protecting the men. When you're going through facial reconstruction, your face can sometimes look worse before it looks better; it's a process, and he didn't want the soldiers to get frustrated with that process. But it also instilled in them a belief that they had faces that weren't worth looking at, and it could be really lonely and isolating. These men were also forced to sit on brightly painted blue benches when they left the hospital grounds, so the public knew not to look at them. They were constantly getting feedback that there was something wrong with their faces.

Despite the mirror ban, sometimes they still saw their reflections. There's a story of a Corporal X, we don't know his name. One of the nurses working at the hospital tells this story about how when he was brought there he was fully bandaged. He kept joking about how he wanted these bandages to be taken off, because his fiancée Molly would want to come and visit, and he didn't want to scare her. And eventually the bandages were taken off and he got a glimpse of his face in a shaving mirror that had been smuggled into the hospital, and he became really despondent after seeing his wounds. The nurse told him: "Well, you should have Molly come and visit." And eventually he said he would never see Molly again. He had written to her and told her he had met another woman in France and broken off their engagement, because he said he didn't want to be a burden on her. And he apparently then went and lived a life of self-imposed isolation. So some of these stories are really tragic.

> **"The soldiers were forced to sit on brightly painted blue benches when they left the hospital grounds, so the public knew not to look at them"**

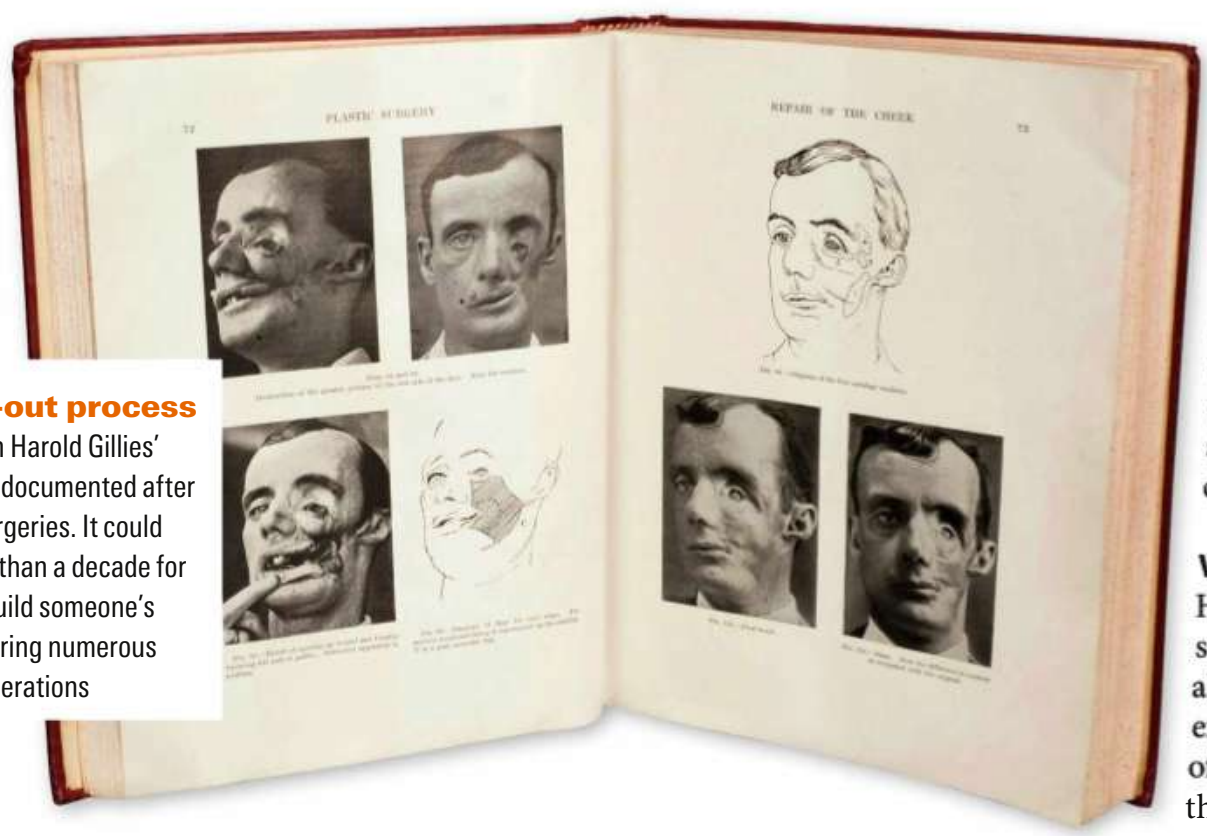
How did the press present Gillies and his work?
When the Queen's Hospital first opened, the press said it was a miracle. But they were also presenting facial injuries as the worst thing that could happen to someone. In fact, it was one of the few injuries during the First World War that warranted a full pension. A facial injury wouldn't necessarily stop these men from working, but that's how badly society believed being disfigured was. So the language around disfigurement was harsh in these newspapers, and again, Gillies was presented entirely in a positive light.

But I want to stress that Gillies was very much a product of the facial bias around him as well. He was going above and beyond what was perhaps surgically necessary so that he could rebuild faces by the standards of what people deemed acceptable at the time.

What were some of his biggest innovations in plastic surgery?
He invented a technique in transplanting skin that dramatically reduced the chance of infection. Previously, surgeons would raise a flap of skin somewhere else on the body to be transplanted, and leave it attached at one end to keep the blood flowing – this attaching bit of tissue is called a pedicle. Then the surgeon could re-attach the loose side of the flap to the area they wanted to reconstruct, and when it formed its own blood vessels there it could be severed at the pedicle.

But when you raise a flap of skin the underside is exposed, so all the blood vessels there are vulnerable to infection – and this was a pre-antibiotic era. So when Gillies was operating on a badly burned sailor called William Vicarage, he lifted a skin flap as normal, but then he did something unprecedented. He rolled the skin into a cylinder and stitched it together, making what's called a tubed pedicle. This meant the underside wasn't exposed to the air, and it was less likely to get infected. The free end of the flap could then be attached to the site of injury, and once a blood supply formed the original connection could be cut.

What was Gillies' bedside manner like?
He was a prankster, and his sense of humour served him and his patients well in the midst of all this horror during the war. I'll give you an example. At the Queen's Hospital, there were all kinds of rules about what the soldiers could and couldn't do; they couldn't drink, they couldn't gamble. But Gillies



Drawn-out process
A soldier in Harold Gillies' casebook, documented after various surgeries. It could take more than a decade for him to rebuild someone's face, requiring numerous difficult operations

WELLCOME IMAGES

Painted faces
Anna Coleman Ladd fits a disfigured soldier with a mask. Although Gillies disliked masks, he recognised their importance in the recovery process

ALAMY

would dress up in this persona whom he called Dr Scroggy, and he would go onto the wards with champagne and gamble with the guys.

You've talked a lot so far about Gillies' successes, but what about his failures?

There were, of course, things that didn't work. For instance, there was a pilot named Lumley who crashed his plane on graduation day and was severely burned. It took him around a year to get into Gillies' care, and in that time he'd become addicted to morphine and was in really bad shape. Gillies came up with an operative plan and wanted to wait until he had regained some strength, but Lumley begged him to do the surgeries sooner. Gillies did put him on the operating table earlier than planned, and as a result Lumley ended up dying.

I remember in the casebook Gillies said something like: "One could have only hoped for a happier ending for such a warrior." But Lumley's fate did teach Gillies some crucial lessons: you can't always do the operation in one big move, sometimes you have to build the face piecemeal; and what works for one patient doesn't necessarily work for another patient. These ideas were crucial to Gillies forming his own principles of plastic surgery.

How were the soldiers treated by society after their procedures were finished?

I'll share the story of a man named Private Walter Ashworth, who was injured on the first day of the battle of the Somme. When he was injured, he fell forward and lay on the battlefield for three days. I mean, there's nothing more harrowing than losing your jaw, being unable to scream and having to lie on a battlefield for three days. Eventually, he found his way to Gillies and as with Corporal X, he learnt that broken faces often led to broken hearts, as his fiancée ended their engagement. His story has a bit of a happier ending, though, because his fiancée's friend got wind of this and she started writing letters to him. Eventually she visited him at the hospital, and they fell in love and ended up getting married.

But when Ashworth was discharged, although Gillies had reconstructed his face, not everybody was able to accept his new appearance. He went back to work as a tailor's assistant and his boss said that he had to perform menial tasks at the back of the shop, because he didn't want Ashworth to frighten the customers.

He felt really disheartened and discouraged by this reception after his surgery. And so he ended up quitting the job, and he and his wife relocated to Australia. Many years later, Gillies bumped into him on that side of the world. And Gillies, at this point, had grown as a reconstructive surgeon and he offered to have another go at Ashworth's face; he said that he felt that he could improve his appearance even further. But Ashworth actually declined the offer. It seems that Ashworth had finally made peace with the face that Gillies had given him so long ago when he felt there was no hope of a normal existence.

What did Gillies do after the war ended?

He continued to operate on a lot of the soldiers, as the reconstructive process went on for many years after the war. He also wanted to develop plastic surgery into a legitimate discipline in its own right, and started to branch out into cosmetic surgery. Interestingly, he introduced his cousin Archibald McIndoe, who a lot of people know through his work with the Guinea Pig Club [a support group created by soldiers who were undergoing surgery for facial injuries or extensive burns in the Second World War], to the strange art of plastic surgery.

How did Gillies' team and the men they treated shape plastic surgery's future?

They were absolutely crucial in ushering plastic surgery into the modern era. These men who were operated on are the pillars of what plastic surgery is in the 21st century. And think about how many people's lives are transformed today through the reconstructive talents of surgeons the world over. H

MORE FROM US

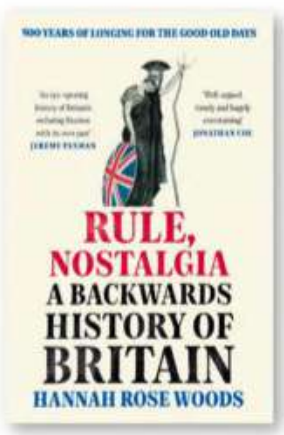
Listen to an extended version of this interview with Lindsey Fitzharris on our **podcast** at *historyextra.com/podcast*

Pet subject
A dog is rescued from the rubble of a bombed house in London, c1940. The "Blitz spirit" epitomised in such images was idealised by politicians and media during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic

BRITISH

A yearning process

HELEN CARR applauds a timely examination of the great British obsession with venerating the past, and its impact on our understanding of the challenges we face in the present



Rule, Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain
by Hannah Rose Woods
WH Allen,
400 pages, £20

In 2020, at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the British media took to invoking the "Blitz spirit". Harking back to the Second World War, the phrase effectively urged us to "Keep Calm and Carry On", disinfecting our much-coveted packets of pasta while NHS workers "on the front line" struggled against the virulent disease.

To many historians of wartime Britain, this kind of romantic reference to the Blitz – which destroyed homes, split families and massacred innocents – seems like bizarre collective amnesia. Yet it was employed by both the government and the press to instil a sense of nostalgia for hard times – or, as historian Hannah Rose Woods puts it in her debut book, "myths of exaggerated stoicism". It played on our national pride and our love of looking back to a purer and happier time.

This moment – in the wake of successive lockdowns, having emerged blinking into the light, awkwardly shaking hands and hugging again – is a timely one for the publication of *Rule, Nostalgia*. In it, Woods examines why we look to the past for comfort in times of crisis, and asks what it is about Britain's past that inspires such a sentimental longing.

Woods begins by assessing our reaction to the global pandemic, particularly the frequent references to the world wars. She discusses how working together as a nation to deliver community aid, behaviour reminiscent of the togetherness of the wartime generation, came to the fore – not least when more than a million British civilians volunteered to provide crucial healthcare to the vulnerable and to administer vaccines. And she notes that, when the Queen addressed the nation two weeks into the first lockdown, she echoed Second World War darling Vera Lynn's famous words: "We'll meet again."

Boris Johnson proudly compared Britain's

GETTY IMAGES

"armies of science" to wartime forces, promising "sunlit upland pastures" over "the last barbed wire". It's no surprise that Johnson is a fan of such rhetoric, being a biographer and ardent admirer of Winston Churchill; tellingly, during the first lockdown he vowed to protect "with every breath in my body" the statue of the wartime leader that stands in Parliament Square.

This brings Woods to another prominent battle of the past two years: the so-called "culture war" that built in intensity following the 2020 toppling in Bristol of a statue of slave trader Edward Colston, leading some government officials to tell historians not to do their job – rewriting history, that is. As Woods astutely observes, that attitude stems largely from a lack of awareness about empire that "compounds misunderstandings about British society itself". It is, she notes, "a savage irony that a country so invested in nostalgia for the national past has failed to acknowledge the realities of British history".

Woods also highlights a deeper and bleaker related issue: the UK's racial divide. This problem is compounded by nationalists invoking a mythic past in order to argue for a "white" present – ignoring the fact that Britain was sold as the "motherland" to people from former imperial possessions in Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent who were invited to live and work in Britain. The past for which many people are nostalgic – a construct often perpetuated in period dramas and which they consider to be better – reflects, as Woods argues, the "instinctive convictions of a section of the British public that its history is and should be white".

As she points out, this yearning for the past is not a new phenomenon: every generation experiences the desire to return to perceived "better times". With the growth of cities and a boom in commerce, the industrial revolution was felt by many Victorians to be a terrible time in which to live. Romantics were certainly desperate to reclaim "England's green and pleasant land", to quote William Blake's famous poem.

Late Victorian and Edwardian society also faced deep-rooted societal issues, expressed in an increase in nervous disorders – "anxieties about anxiety" – resulting in an epidemic of ailments. Many blamed industrialisation as the root cause, and in 1869 American physician George M Beard coined a name for this new condition: "neurasthenia" – a "modern nervousness [that] is the cry of the system struggling with its environment". The cure? Nature – or, rather, dreams of a green utopia reminiscent of a romanticised Middle Ages. This nostalgia for an almost Arthurian dreamscape was perpetuated by William Morris, a pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement that aimed to revive the traditional craftsmanship of generations past.

Yet even in earlier centuries Britons were already fixing their gaze on the past. They did it during the rule of Cromwell and the protectorate, when Christmas was spent in solemn prayer and frugality. And they did it in the years following the Reformation, when deprived of long-cherished Catholic liturgy, icons and art. Woods observes that people "almost everywhere we turn" in the 16th and 17th centuries were searching for a mythic "golden age", aching for a purer way of being.

This pervading societal longing was heavily politicised by Tudor and Stuart monarchs, who promised to restore peace and prosperity to the nation. Woods argues that the key legal foundation of the Reformation was a push back against "imperial domination from Rome" – promoting the view that an independent England was a better England.

> **"Woods observes that people 'almost everywhere we turn' in the 16th and 17th centuries were searching for a mythic 'golden age'"**

Particularly during and shortly after the reign of Elizabeth I, victories for Protestant England (such as that against the Spanish Armada in 1588) became intertwined with national pride and symbolism, episodes epitomising the "Merrie England" of "Good Queen Bess". During this period, Woods says, England was "setting its eyes on expansion around the globe, and articulating this vision of greatness through appeals both to England's Anglo-Saxon inheritance, and the ancient Britons who resisted it".

As Hannah Rose Woods elegantly argues, history comprises the stories we tell ourselves, and our longing to make these stories reality is our way of making sense of the present. Her incredibly timely and convincing book warns that, though nostalgia for "better times" is inherently human, to truly understand the present we must separate such pervading myths from reality and welcome a clear-eyed and broad view of the past. H

Helen Carr is a historian, writer and broadcaster. Her latest book, co-authored with Suzannah Lipscomb, is *What is History, Now?* (W&N, 2021)

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Annabel Abbs on Eliza Acton's pivotal role in inventing the modern recipe book

"Anyone who has ever cooked from an early recipe will understand how difficult it is. Cookery books never used to have ingredients lists and rarely made any mention of how long a dish should be cooked for. They simply assumed the reader would know how to cook. Through her inexperience, Eliza Acton realised these details were really important to include – she invented the recipe as we know it today."

Charlotte Cooper-Davis on pioneering medieval writer Christine de Pizan

"The fact that Christine de Pizan was a female author writing defences of women in the 15th century has always intrigued people. But to me, what's most significant about Christine is her work as an entrepreneur, and the novelty she brought to the table by being a writer who was so in control of the products she made: from carefully editing her own manuscripts to engaging famous artists to illustrate them."

Martin Williams on the verdant history of the Sahara desert

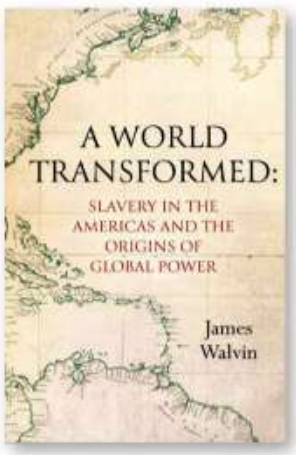
"I first visited the Sahara in 1962, and we found abundant evidence of a former human presence. There were rock engravings showing elephants, giraffes, rhinos and hippos, and the fossilised bones of these animals. I was 21 at the time and my first question was: 'Why was the Sahara once green?' And then I thought: 'Why isn't it green today? What happened?'"

ON THE H PODCAST

SLAVERY

A global revolution

JOHN HARRIS is impressed by a wide-ranging and clear-eyed work exploring the mechanisms of the slave trade and its enduring legacy in shaping the modern world order



A World Transformed: Slavery in the Americas and the Origins of Global Power
by James Walvin
Little, Brown, 400 pages, £25

Voice for change Quobna Ottobah Cugoano with Maria and Richard Cosway, the artist who produced this 1784 engraving. Three years later, Cugoano published a memoir arguing for an end to the slave trade in the British empire

Quobna Ottobah Cugoano was born in what's now Ghana. Kidnapped at the age of 13, he was forced into the stinking belly of a slave ship. After surviving the Middle Passage, he worked in the sugar fields of Grenada before sailing to Britain in servitude in 1772.

Though Britain was the most prolific slave-trading power of the 18th century, when Cugoano arrived here the legal status of slaves in Britain was in question, and a movement to halt the nation's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade was growing. Cugoano obtained his freedom, got baptised and found his voice. In his 1787 memoir he described slave traders as "servants of the devil", arguing for abolition of the trade. He then went a remarkable step further, demanding an end to slavery itself throughout the British empire. Under his plan, Britain would eradicate slavery, the Royal Navy would patrol the African coast for slave ships, and Britain's soul would be saved. Though radical at the time, within 50 years his proposals would become British policy.

His story is recounted in James Walvin's excellent new book, *A World Transformed*. Like Cugoano, the author covers a lot of ground. A fluid writer, Walvin seamlessly weaves together the histories of slavery in Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia from the origins of the Atlantic slave system in the 15th century, through its peak in the late 18th century to its final demise a century later. He shows that people, goods, ships, cultures and empires were constantly shifting, ultimately creating a "vast machine which transformed the face of the Americas, enhanced the well-being of the Western World, and created cultural habits we are familiar with today".

A survey of slavery in the Atlantic world needs to be expansive, and Walvin has an admirably wide lens. He examines the slave ship and the plantation – the heart of the "machine" – but also explores the wider context. He discusses the cowrie shells gathered in the Maldives, transported to India, Brazil, Europe and, finally, west Africa where they were exchanged for enslaved people. He covers the guns made in Birmingham for the same purpose; the cotton, tobacco and sugar grown in plantations worked by enslaved people and consumed in Europe; and the mahogany harvested by enslaved people in the Caribbean and Central America that became Chippendale chairs in the country homes of Britain. Plus he shows how ideas about race and racial superiority circulated together with these products.

> **"Cowrie shells gathered in the Maldives were transported to India, Brazil, Europe and west Africa, where they were exchanged for enslaved people"**

A World Transformed is also filled with human stories such as Cugoano's. We hear from well-known figures including Olaudah Equiano and Columbus, but also more obscure ones – for example, Mrs Elletson, an absentee plantation owner in London. This impressive cast acts to show how people who created the transformations charted in the book were themselves in turn transformed.

That slavery revolutionised the western world will not surprise students of history, but the author's broad thinking and use of recent scholarship reveals fresh aspects, such as impacts on the environment and culture. He also charts the growing public interest in slavery, and probes the issue of reparations. Walvin closes with the question: "Who could now deny that slavery matters?" This vivid, troubling and insightful book shows just why. H

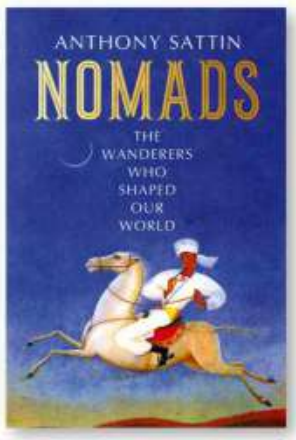
John Harris is McDonald-Boswell assistant professor of history at Erskine College, and author of *The Last Slave Ships* (Yale, 2021)

ALAMY

EURASIAN

Wandering stars

DAVID ABULAFIA enjoys a novel synthesis of history and travel-writing that ranges across the vast Eurasian steppes



Nomads: The Wanderers Who Shaped Our World
by Anthony Sattin
John Murray,
368 pages, £25

"There's real life for you…The open road, the dusty highway…" Mr Toad's encomium to a nomadic life finds a more serious-minded echo in Anthony Sattin's new book, which reveals that there has been more to the history of civilisation than cities and the settled life. In it, he shows vividly how nomads connected with nature in ways that city-dwellers can never achieve. Nomadism, he demonstrates, takes many forms: vast armies on the move in the days of the Mongol empire; transhumant shepherds in remote corners of modern Iran; and refugees from war and persecution – even if their ultimate aim is to find a permanent home somewhere.

Sattin's book reflects a recent surge of interest in the history of Eurasia, focusing on the great steppe lands stretching east from Hungary and Ukraine. Fascination with their ancient Scythian inhabitants goes back as far as Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BC for an increasingly urbanised Greek audience. Skilled archers who lived on the trot, the Scythians forged a great realm north of the Black Sea and the Caspian. They were capable of humiliating the formidable Persian army, yet had no capital city. They were illiterate, but created wonderful golden jewellery on which a deer motif symbolised life in the open. Sattin also brings together the history of Attila's Huns and the Xiongnu from whom perhaps the former sprang – one nomadic army aiming at the Roman empire, the other at the Chinese.

Of course, anyone discussing the vast open spaces of Eurasia is bound to concentrate on the Mongols, who are much better documented and possess an even worse reputation for mass slaughter. Sattin acknowledges the Mongols' wanton cruelty to those who refused to submit, such as the inhabitants of Baghdad in 1258. But he also emphasises that they were far more tolerant of religious diversity than their contemporaries in Europe, and brought peace to vast tracts of Eurasia across which merchant caravans could travel without fear. This enabled the creation of a network of routes along which silk, among other commodities, was carried west from China. Sattin here falls victim to the romantic idea of the Silk Road he is elsewhere careful to dispel. Beijing did not teem with Italian merchants, though they could find silk (albeit not the best) in their trading colonies in Crimea. Chinese porcelain mainly travelled by sea across the Indian Ocean, not overland. Nor is it clear that Europeans learned how to use compasses from the Chinese.

The emphasis on Eurasia comes at a price. Sattin says relatively little about north Africa and North America, and he completely omits the Sinti and Roma, nomads from India with whom Europeans became familiar from 1400 onwards. Some of Sattin's generalisations are too bold, but overall this is a delightful book – and it is a treat to see the history of an enormous but neglected part of the world through the eyes of a travel writer who has trod much of the ground he describes. H

David Abulafia is professor emeritus of Mediterranean history at the University of Cambridge. His books include *The Boundless Sea* (Allen Lane, 2019)

Gold sovereign
A fourth-century BC gold plaque buried in a royal tomb in Crimea by the Scythians – one of the nomadic peoples discussed in Anthony Sattin's new book

BRIDGEMAN

Rose between thorns

Alison Weir discusses her novel about Elizabeth of York (below), a pivotal figure in the Wars of the Roses and queen of Henry VII

What drew you to Elizabeth of York?
I have always been fascinated by the late medieval and early Tudor periods, and Elizabeth's life spans both. She is an enigma in many ways, at the centre of several mysteries and controversies – notably the disappearance of her brothers, the "princes in the Tower", and her relationship with her uncle, Richard III. Did she really scheme to marry the man many believed had ordered the murder of the princes? The sources are largely silent about her role and her views. I wanted to look at the evidence forensically, and to construct a narrative based on probabilities.

How did the process of writing this novel differ from that for your series on Henry VIII's wives?
I wrote the whole story from Elizabeth's point of view, from childhood to death, for a more dramatic and suspenseful telling of her story – there was a lot going on about which she did not know.

What was your most valuable source?
I had researched her extensively for a biography I published in 2013. There are many valuable sources – the Croyland Chronicle, Elizabeth's privy purse expenses and diplomatic calendars, for example. But for a novelist looking for insights, "The Song of Lady Bessy" – a contemporary ballad that probably contains elements of truth – was really useful, if controversial!

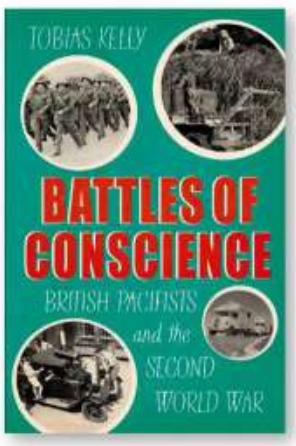
How did you research the fate of her brothers, the princes in the Tower?
I looked at all the evidence and collated it in a chronological timeline. This presented what, to me, seemed the only credible solution to the mystery.

Elizabeth of York: The Last White Rose
by Alison Weir
Headline, 544 pages, £20

SECOND WORLD WAR

What price peace?

TESSA DUNLOP commends an examination of pacifism in the Second World War that explores how following their consciences affected the lives of people who refused to fight



Battles of Conscience: British Pacifists and the Second World War
by Tobias Kelly
Chatto & Windus, 384 pages, £22

Tobias Kelly's scholarly examination of British pacifism neatly addresses the gap between past reality and current historical narrative. Much more has been written about the (far fewer) conscientious objectors who refused to fight in the First World War than those in the Second, in which three times as many pacifists took a stand. This says a great deal about how we remember the 1939–45 conflict. Widely regarded as the right war to fight, there seems to be little space for pacifists in discussions of the war against the Axis.

The timing of this book is particularly prescient, arriving in the middle of another conflict – sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine – in which freedom and oppression are clearly delineated. What do pacifists do in such circumstances? And how should the state treat them? As Kelly points out, the Second World War was "a war for freedom", with conscience an important part of the mix. The impact on the 60,000 citizens who refused to take up arms – several of whom are introduced in this book – was complicated, often moving and occasionally fatal.

> **"The impact on the 60,000 citizens who refused to take up arms in the Second World War was complicated, often moving and occasionally fatal"**

We meet Roy Ridgway, a young clerk from Liverpool whose religious and moral convictions led him to refuse military service and insist he was given humanitarian work "where his conscience was able to do as it demanded". Roy endured doubts, arguments and a stint in prison before joining the Friends Ambulance Unit in Syria, later travelling to Italy and France. Pacifism wasn't for the faint-hearted, nor action exclusively reserved for soldiers.

Roy is one of many protagonists featured in this rich, albeit wordy, assessment of what "people committed to peace should do when the world tips into war". There are also cameos from Vera Brittain, John Middleton Murry and Benjamin Britten. With the Second World War coming just over 20 years after the horrors of the first, the prevalence and concerns of those pacifists should not surprise us. H

Tessa Dunlop is a historian, writer and broadcaster. Her latest book is *Army Girls* (Headline, 2021)

Headlines of hope A pacifist distributes the *Peace News* in Northampton, c1943

DICK SHEPPARD'S QUESTION
Can you KILL MEN of HIM WHO DIED FOR MEN?
WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?
PEACE
IS NOT
IT IS
There is only one way of conquering your enemy – by making him your friend.

Words against war Posters promote pacifism outside St George's Church in Bloomsbury, London during the Second World War. Three times as many pacifists took a stand in that conflict than in the 1914–18 war

GETTY IMAGES/MARY EVANS

Sounds of the seventies
A recording of *Top of the Pops* in the 1970s. Simon J Potter considers the BBC's 100-year history

CULTURAL

Broadcast views

This is the BBC: Entertaining the Nation, Speaking for Britain, 1922–2022
by Simon J Potter
Oxford University Press, 320 pages, £20

Joining a long list of publications marking the centenary of the BBC this year, Simon J Potter's lucid book provides a useful account of the key staging posts in the life of this national institution. He argues that there is "nothing inevitable" about the BBC, and that "much of its history has been shaped by haphazard experimentation".

Potter leads readers on a pleasant historical canter, starting from the BBC's small beginnings as a company to its transformation into a corporation from 1927 under the mercurial John Reith. He discusses the organisation's imperial role, its much-lauded contribution to winning hearts and minds during the Second World War and its postwar expansion. He also explores the success of BBC television and increasing competition from commercial broadcasters at home and abroad. His text is leavened with interesting glimpses into popular programmes and the creative people behind the shows.

Drawing on decades of academic scholarship, the book offers balanced, though brief, assessments of the changing relationships between the broadcaster, Whitehall, its competitors and the public in Britain, and of the organisation's impact overseas. Potter is all praise for the BBC's efforts during the recent Covid-19 lockdowns, claiming that "no other media provider offered such a range of services". But he is not overly sanguine about its future, noting that, over the past two decades, the corporation "has been in a state of perpetual crisis".

Potter's book is an ambitious attempt to deal with the BBC as a whole over a century. Perhaps inevitably, with such a vast topic, the treatment of some issues is rather perfunctory, and those expecting fresh revelations based on new archival research will be disappointed. Nonetheless, this book offers value for money as a general introduction to the BBC, and a good read overall. H

Chandrika Kaul, professor of modern history at the University of St Andrews. She is currently working on a book on the BBC and empire

SOCIAL

Cold comfort

Snow Widows: Scott's Fatal Antarctic Expedition Through the Lives of the Women They Left Behind
by Katherine MacInnes
William Collins, 512 pages, £25

The names of Captain Robert Falcon Scott, Captain "Laurie" Oates, "Birdie" Bowers, "Taff" Evans and "Bill" Wilson are widely known. They recall a tale of tragedy but also courage: that of the ill-fated British Antarctic Expedition that culminated in their deaths during the trek back from the south pole in 1912. But the names of the women who survived them – Kathleen Scott, Caroline Oates, Emily Bowers, Lois Evans and Oriana Wilson – have slipped from view. Katherine MacInnes's book puts these wives and mothers, and the sacrifices they made, at the heart of the story of the *Terra Nova*. Drawing on archival research and imagination, each woman's story is traced to compelling and unsettling effect.

The women had vastly different interests and experiences shaped by education and class. Very little except the expedition would have conspired to bring the noble Captain Oates's mother, Caroline, chatelaine of Gestingthorpe Hall, into contact with Evans' wife, Lois, who survived on the precipice of poverty in south Wales. Their shared loss did little to level the playing field: a hugely successful public fundraising effort, prompted by Captain Scott's final plea to "look after our people", raised £75,000 (equivalent to about £4.5m today). Kathleen Scott, the expedition leader's widow, was given £8,500 of this, and her infant son £3,500; Lois received just £1,250. Even in death, the class structure of early 20th-century Britain was disturbingly evident.

"I have chased the Snow Widows through dusty attics and auction rooms, and sifted them from history's cutting room floors," MacInnes says, and her "aim has not been to analyse, but to try to place the stories in their historical context and let the women speak for themselves". It is right that the book closes with Lois, the woman who had the least opportunity to speak for herself in life. Freed from her unmarked grave in Morriston Cemetery, she has at last made her mark on history H

Sarah Crook, senior lecturer in history at Swansea University

BBC ARCHIVE

HISTORY EXTRA MASTERCLASS

Femina: Women of the Middle Ages
with Janina Ramirez

Janina Ramirez is an Oxford lecturer, BBC broadcaster, author and researcher. She has presented and written more than 30 hours of BBC history documentaries on TV and radio, and her latest book is *Femina: A New History of the Middle Ages, Through the Women Written Out of it* (WH Allen, 2022).

8, 15 and 22 July 2022

This curated three-part virtual lecture series from historian and broadcaster Janina Ramirez will offer a fresh look at the medieval world through the women usually written out of it. From political power-players to the overlooked figures who deserve to be better known, this masterclass promises to restore women to their rightful place in a fascinating era.

LYNN HATZIUS

Each session combines an introductory lecture, extensive Q&A, and discussion of a primary source chosen by Janina Ramirez.

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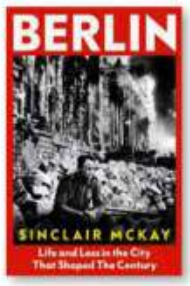
ELLE WORDS BY **REBECCA FRANKS**

ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

GLOBAL

Berlin
by Sinclair McKay
(Viking, 464 pages, £20)

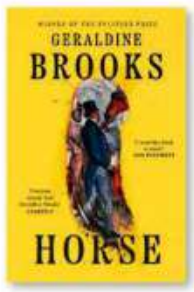


City scenes

It's not possible to understand the 20th century without understanding Berlin. That's the contention of Sinclair McKay, whose biography of the German capital grapples with its complex and traumatic history. As with his bestseller *Dresden*, McKay uses previously unseen, first-person accounts from the city's inhabitants to build up a vivid picture, from the First World War's end to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

FICTION

Horse
by Geraldine Brooks
(Little Brown, 416 pages, £18.99)

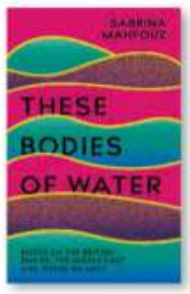


American triptych

Based on the true story of Lexington, a brilliant thoroughbred and stud sire, *Horse* is the latest novel from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Geraldine Brooks. Weaving together three tales from American history – those of an enslaved groom in Kentucky, 1850; a gallery owner in New York City, 1954; and a scientist and art historian in Washington, DC, 2019 – Brooks reckons with the country's legacy of racism.

GLOBAL

These Bodies of Water
by Sabrina Mahfouz
(Tinder Press, 288 pages, £16.99)



Personal interrogation

When Sabrina Mahfouz found herself in a high-security vetting interview in Whitehall, every aspect of her life came under scrutiny. She left with a strong sense that her trustworthiness as a woman of Middle Eastern heritage was in question, and a desire to make sense of the encounter. The result is this book, exploring the British empire's grip on the Middle East in an original blend of memoir and history.

CHILDREN'S

Cleopatra, Queen of the Nile
by Dominic Sandbrook
(Particular Books, 336 pages, £14.99)

Egyptian odyssey

In the latest instalment of his popular *Adventures in Time* series, Dominic Sandbrook tells the story of the most famous queen of all, Cleopatra. In this gripping work of non-fiction – written for history-hungry children – he brings to life this legendary woman, whose reputation has survived the ages. Expect doomed love affairs and epic battles, set in an ancient world of pharaohs, priests and pyramids.

MILITARY

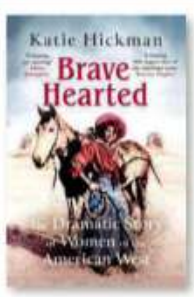
Burning Steel: A Tank Regiment at War
by Peter Hart
(Profile Books, 480 pages, £25)

Horror of war

In his 40 years of talking to veterans, the former oral historian for the Imperial War Museum claims he has never heard such dramatic and horrific scenes as those described in this book. Drawing together eye-witness accounts with letters and diaries, Peter Hart puts us in the shoes of the soldiers who served in tanks in the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry in the Second World War. Their tales are raw and visceral.

WOMEN'S

Brave Hearted: The Dramatic Story of Women of the American West
by Katie Hickman
(Virago, 400 pages, £25)

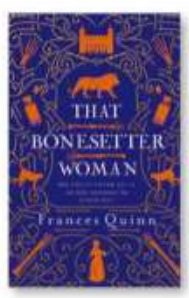


Pioneer drama

The Wild West is often still seen as a man's world. Yet as Katie Hickman chronicles in her richly researched book, women's stories are crucial to this period of American history. From wives and mothers travelling thousands of miles to the Native Americans displaced by white settlers, these women were courageous and resilient. An unforgettable cast of characters brings an epic tale to life.

FICTION

That Bonesetter Woman
by Frances Quinn
(Simon & Schuster, 448 pages, £14.99)



Fame and fortune

This second novel by the author of historical hit *The Smallest Man* takes its inspiration from two of Georgian England's most famous celebrities. Endurance Proudfoot is determined to go into the family trade and become a bonesetter, despite being a woman. But when she finds herself packed off to London with her sister, disgraced beauty Lucinda, the pair embark on a rollercoaster adventure.

GLOBAL

Opium's Orphans: The 200-year History of the War on Drugs
by PE Caquet
(Reaktion Books, 408 pages, £25)

Risky business

When did the war on drugs begin? PE Caquet offers a history of global prohibition, tracing its roots back to the 19th-century Opium Wars in China and demonstrating that it arose from historical accident rather than design. He asks important questions about how the worldwide system, which has grown to include a whole variety of outlawed substances, functions today – and whether it's time for change. H

Death in miniature

These mysterious 95mm-long coffins – discovered at Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh in 1836 – are among the items on display at an exhibition dedicated to the history of human dissection

NATIONAL MUSEUMS SCOTLAND

ENCOUNTERS

82 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT
By **Jonathan Wright** and **Rhiannon Davies**
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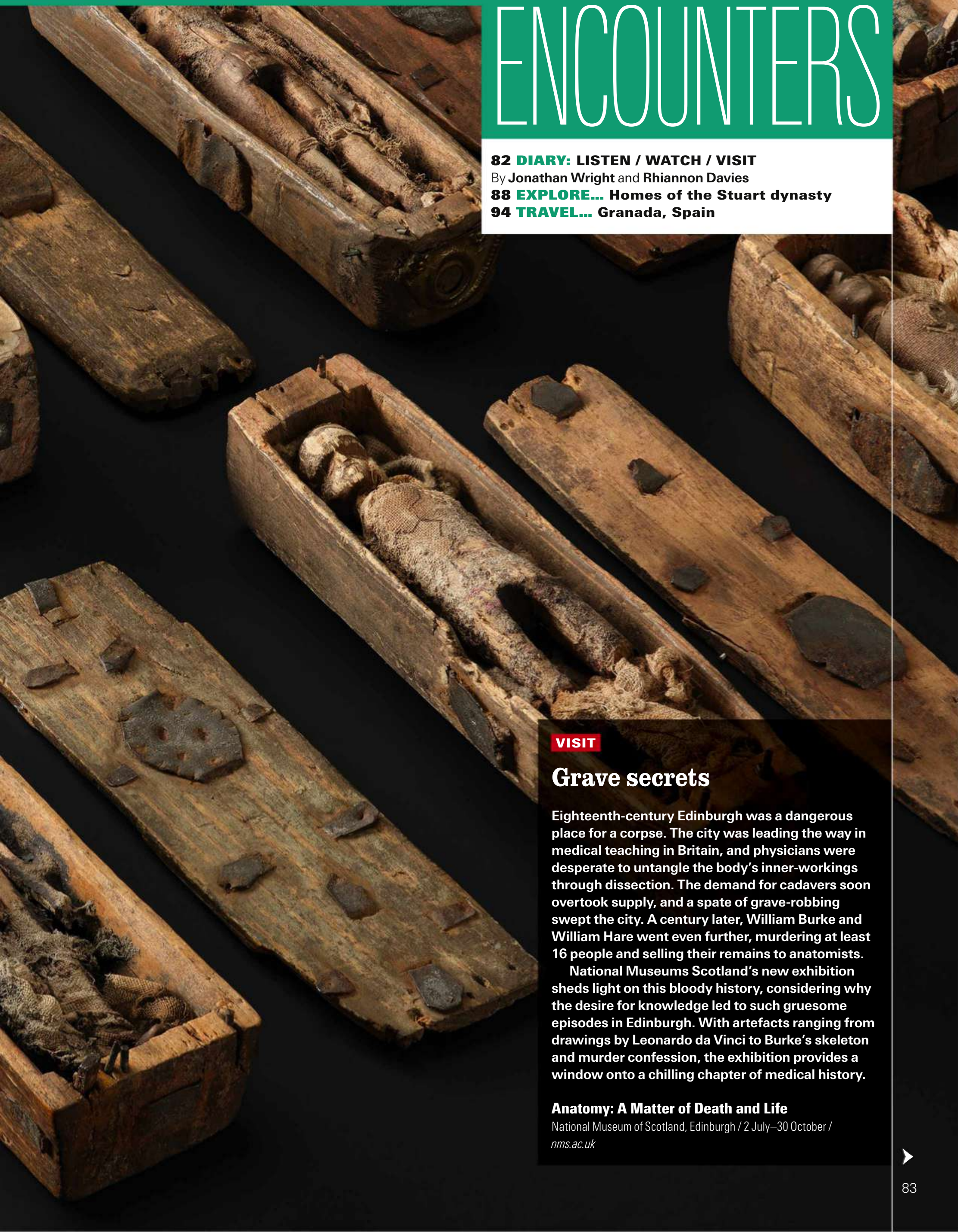


VISIT

Grave secrets

Eighteenth-century Edinburgh was a dangerous place for a corpse. The city was leading the way in medical teaching in Britain, and physicians were desperate to untangle the body's inner-workings through dissection. The demand for cadavers soon overtook supply, and a spate of grave-robbing swept the city. A century later, William Burke and William Hare went even further, murdering at least 16 people and selling their remains to anatomists.

National Museums Scotland's new exhibition sheds light on this bloody history, considering why the desire for knowledge led to such gruesome episodes in Edinburgh. With artefacts ranging from drawings by Leonardo da Vinci to Burke's skeleton and murder confession, the exhibition provides a window onto a chilling chapter of medical history.

Anatomy: A Matter of Death and Life
National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh / 2 July–30 October / *nms.ac.uk*

VISIT

Step into the past

History lovers are preparing to descend on the Wiltshire countryside once more this June for the Chalke Valley History Festival – seven days filled with talks and living history.

Speakers at this year's festival include Philippa Gregory and Alison Weir, who are discussing women in history on 20 June; Matt Lewis, who will delve into the mystery of the princes in the Tower on 23 June; and Dan Snow, who will reveal what it felt like to rediscover Ernest Shackleton's lost ship *Endurance*, on 26 June. For those who prefer immersive history, "The Trench" offers a glimpse into the experiences of British soldiers fighting the Germans at Cassel in May 1940.

Chalke Valley History Festival
Broad Chalke, Wiltshire / 20–26 June / Tickets required / *cvhf.org.uk*

Lenny Henry with his mother in 1975. His new two-part series examines British-Caribbean life

WATCH

Questions of identity

As a child, Lenny Henry was told by his mother to go out and integrate with the local people of Dudley. Growing up in a household where the idea of being Jamaican was a constant presence, he found this request confusing. Would fitting in with those around him mean he would in some way lose his Caribbean roots?

Now in his 60s, the writer, actor and comedian is still thinking about what integration means. That question underpins a two-part celebration of British-Caribbean life and culture, beginning with the explosion in art, theatre and music associated with the Windrush generation. Famous faces offering their insights in the series include musician Jazzie B, artist Sonia Boyce, actor David Harewood and poet Benjamin Zephaniah.

Lenny Henry's Caribbean Britain
BBC Two / Wednesday 22 June

Austin Butler stars as Elvis Presley in Baz Luhrmann's hotly anticipated biopic of the rock'n'roll star

WATCH

Return of the king

There have been plenty of movies about Elvis Presley over the years, but it's probably safe to say that few arrived with such a sense of buzz around them as new biopic *Elvis*. Co-scripted by director Baz Luhrmann (*Moulin Rouge!*, *The Great Gatsby*), it explores the King's life and music via his relationship with his manager, Colonel Tom Parker.

Austin Butler (*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*) stars as Elvis, while Tom Hanks plays Parker. The latter is an especially intriguing piece of casting, considering the gap between Hanks's nice-guy public image and the enigmatic Parker, a former carnival worker whose management of Presley's business affairs was described by an attorney as "unethical" in 1980.

Elvis
In cinemas from Friday 24 June

CHALKE VALLEY HISTORY FESTIVAL/WARNER BROS

Commandos on HMS *Hermes* during the Falklands campaign. Many veterans remain troubled by their experiences of the war

WATCH

After the guns fell silent

In April 1982, Margaret Thatcher sent British forces to the South Atlantic to retake the Falkland Islands from Argentina. For many Britons at the time, this represented a proud story of national success: a war won within a few weeks and with relatively few casualties.

The British troops who were on the front-line saw the Falklands War differently. They were men who fought in hand-to-hand battles where the ground was won with bayonets as well as bullets. These are the kinds of experiences veterans rarely discuss, but a new one-off documentary gathers together the unflinching testimony of 10 men who experienced both the adrenaline of conflict and the horror at first hand.

For some of the troops, who have had four decades to process these events, their service in the Falklands has become a badge of honour. Others remain deeply troubled by their experiences. All were changed forever by what they saw. The documentary also serves as a reminder of how our understanding of trauma has evolved over recent years.

Falklands: The Frontline Story (title TBC)
BBC Two / Expected to air Sunday 12 June

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/JOE BASS

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit **historyextra.com** for weekly updates on upcoming television and radio programmes

HISTORY ON THE AIRWAVES

"Naturalists proposed the world's longest wildlife reserve along the line of the former Iron Curtain"

Anthropologist **MARY-ANN OCHOTA** tells us about her new radio series exploring the European Green Belt, and explains how nature has become intertwined with postwar history along its course

What is the European Green Belt?
In 2002 a group of naturalists proposed the idea of creating the world's longest wildlife reserve along the line of the former Iron Curtain. When you imagine the border between countries, you imagine a single fence, but actually in many places it's two fences with this strip of dead ground in between.

But it's not actually dead ground; it's ground that's left alone, and that is where the potential for wildlife and habitats exists. So you've got this green ribbon that runs right across the landmass of continental Europe, from the Finnish-Russian border to the Greek-Albanian border.

Has there been a formalised process to create the green belt?
Not along its entire length. The Germans have been good at this, but in the Balkans it's a bit more chaotic – although actually that's where some of the most interesting stories are to be found.

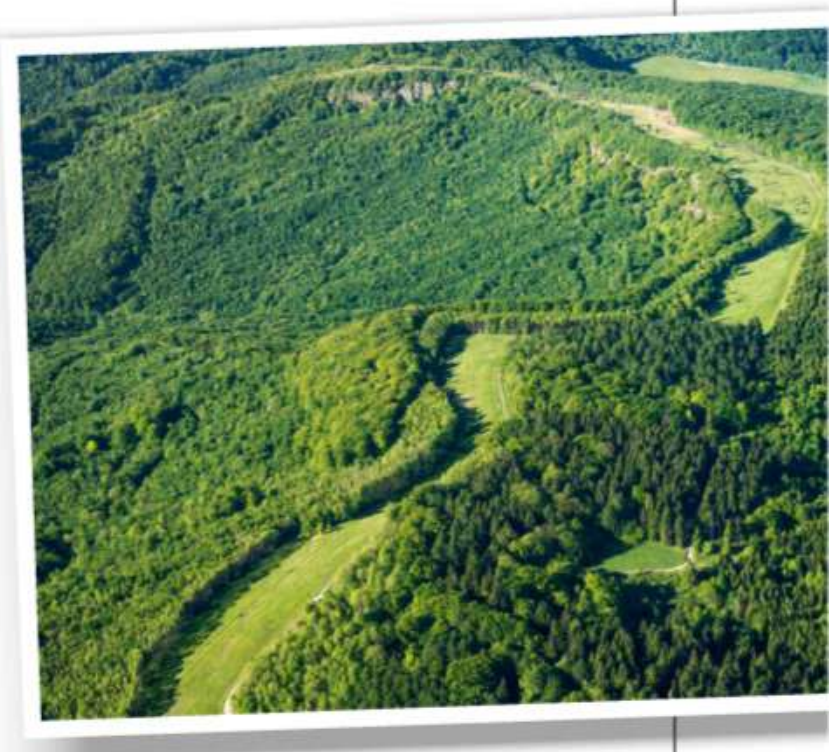
Can you see evidence of recent history as you travel the green belt?
There are places where the legacy of history is writ large. In Trieste [a city state between 1947 and 1954, when the port and its surrounding land were divided between Italy and Yugoslavia], there are warehouses where Italian refugees left their belongings as they were fleeing land that had become part of Yugoslavia. And their belongings are still there – not forgotten, but no one wants to open that box of skeletons.

Then there are things like satellite communications arrays that are rusting and faded, very much of the Soviet era, but which still dominate the skyline. They've become memorials of this period, and are still objects of fascination. But human history affects the wildlife too. There are stories of deer herds that remember where the barbed wire fences were and don't cross those lines. I thought these stories were apocryphal, but they're true.

It's hoped the green belt will help heal divisions, but is the conflict in Ukraine causing problems on the Finnish-Russian border?
Yes. The Finnish countryside after the Second World War became something of an industrial area: they were mining, cutting down forests and over-hunting. But on the Soviet side of the border the land remained much more wild. There was lots of co-operation between conservationists on the two sides of the border to help things like rare pearl mussels and reindeer, but sadly now the Russians aren't talking to their colleagues in Finland. H

The Compass: Walking the Iron Curtain will be broadcast on the BBC World Service from Wednesday 22 June and available via BBC Sounds

BBC WORLD SERVICE



A section of the European Green Belt in Germany. The reserve stretches across continental Europe

VISIT

Stitched into history

From sumptuous silk and raffia creations to bold protest posters, the V&A's newest exhibition is a visual delight with a political punch. Examining the recent history of African fashion, the display's ground floor documents the creative explosion in clothes design, music and more during the African liberation years – the mid-late 1950s to 1994.

Elsewhere a section is dedicated to cloth, and the politics that are bound up in the fabric, considering how the choice to create and dress in indigenous cloths was a powerful political statement.

More than 250 artefacts make up the exhibition, with work from 45 designers on display. As well as showcasing the creations of iconic 20th-century African designers such as Chris Seydou and Alphadi, the work of contemporary designers who are pushing boundaries today also features.

Africa Fashion
The V&A, London / Opens 2 July / Booking required / *vam.ac.uk*

Naima Bennis, an innovative Moroccan designer. She's one of 45 creatives who feature in the V&A's new exhibition dedicated to African fashion

LISTEN

When power slips away

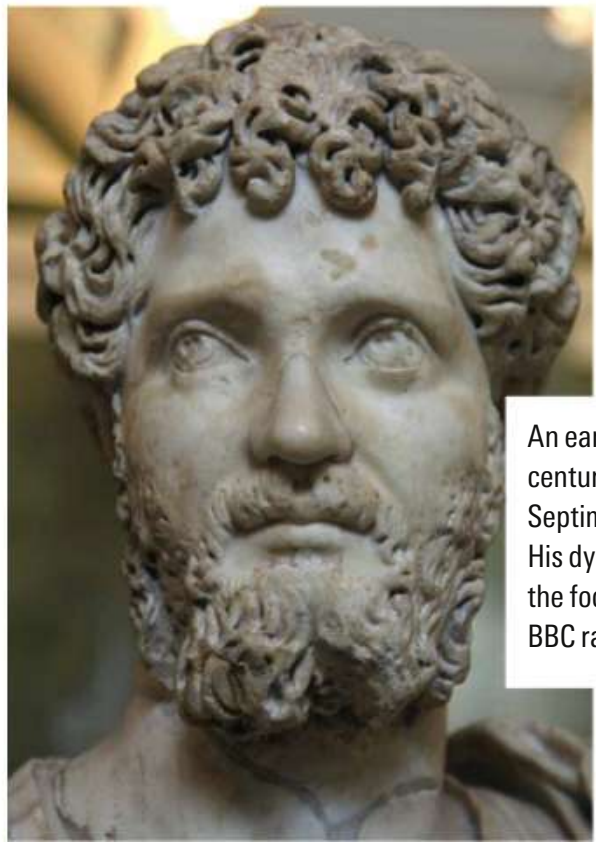
Septimius Severus (AD 145–211) was Rome's first African emperor, and his reign took him to Britain. Born in Leptis Magna in what's now Libya, he died in Eboracum (known today as York) after falling ill while he was campaigning to conquer the region of Caledonia.

So how did Septimius rise to such power? And what should we make of his reign? These are questions that lie at the centre of a new drama by Paterson Joseph and David Reed. The show introduces listeners to the emperor (played by Joseph) on his deathbed, where he angrily rejects advice from his physician, Sammonicus (voiced by David Mitchell), that an amputation may be necessary because of his gout.

In order to placate his patient, Sammonicus asks Septimius to talk about his adventures in Britain. What follows is a self-serving tale of a family man who sees war as a way to protect the empire's borders, and thus its citizens.

The truth is rather more complex. Septimius has grown paranoid and has even banned his wife, Julia (Adjoa Andoh), from entering his chamber – and as we discover, he has good reason to be worried.

Severus
BBC Radio 4 / Monday 4 July



An early third-century bust of Septimius Severus. His dying days are the focus of a new BBC radio drama

LISTEN

Above the law?

On 10 May 1924, J Edgar Hoover (left) was appointed acting director of the Bureau of Investigation, the forerunner of the FBI. Made permanent director a few months later, Hoover was a kingpin in the US domestic law enforcement system until his death at the age of 77, in 1972.

Over these years, he became arguably the most powerful figure in 20th-century America. But he was a divisive figure, a man who broke laws he was supposed to enforce, worked against political dissidents and accumulated secret files to blackmail senior politicians.

All of this should give Emily Maitlis ample material for a series tracing Hoover's influence on America via 10 extraordinary encounters.

The People vs J Edgar Hoover
BBC Radio 4 / Starts 13 June

GETTY IMAGES/V&A

This year's air show at IWM Duxford promises aerial exploits, historical planes and more

VISIT

Flying high

IWM Duxford is marking Father's Day weekend in style, with its eagerly anticipated summer air show. A range of aircraft are taking to the skies, and on 18 June the Red Arrows will be performing one of their famous fly pasts. In homage to the airfield's role in the Second World War, Spitfires and Hurricanes will also be in attendance.

If land vehicles are more your speed, the museum's Military Vehicle Wing is putting on vehicle demonstrations, as well as offering the chance for visitors to climb aboard one of their military armoured personnel carriers and enjoy the ride of a lifetime.

The museum's hangars and exhibitions will also be open for the weekend, including AirSpace, which is home to a selection of aircraft including a Concorde 101, which visitors can clamber into. H

Duxford Summer Air Show
IWM Duxford, Cambridgeshire / 18–19 June / Booking required / *iwm.org.uk/events*

WATCH

Second city stories

Nearly 250,000 Brummies have roots in Pakistan, India or Bangladesh. That's more than a quarter of the city's population, a figure that in itself acts as a reminder of how it's impossible to understand modern British history without also understanding the British south Asian experience.

It's a history explored in the latest iteration of living-history strand *Back in Time*, which sends the Sharma family back to the 1950s, when immigration from the Indian subcontinent began in earnest. Negotiating their way through five decades, family members take on the jobs and schooling their predecessors did, live where they lived, and eat what they ate. And just how do you prepare fresh meals when the greengrocer stocks swedes in volume but you can't buy chilli?

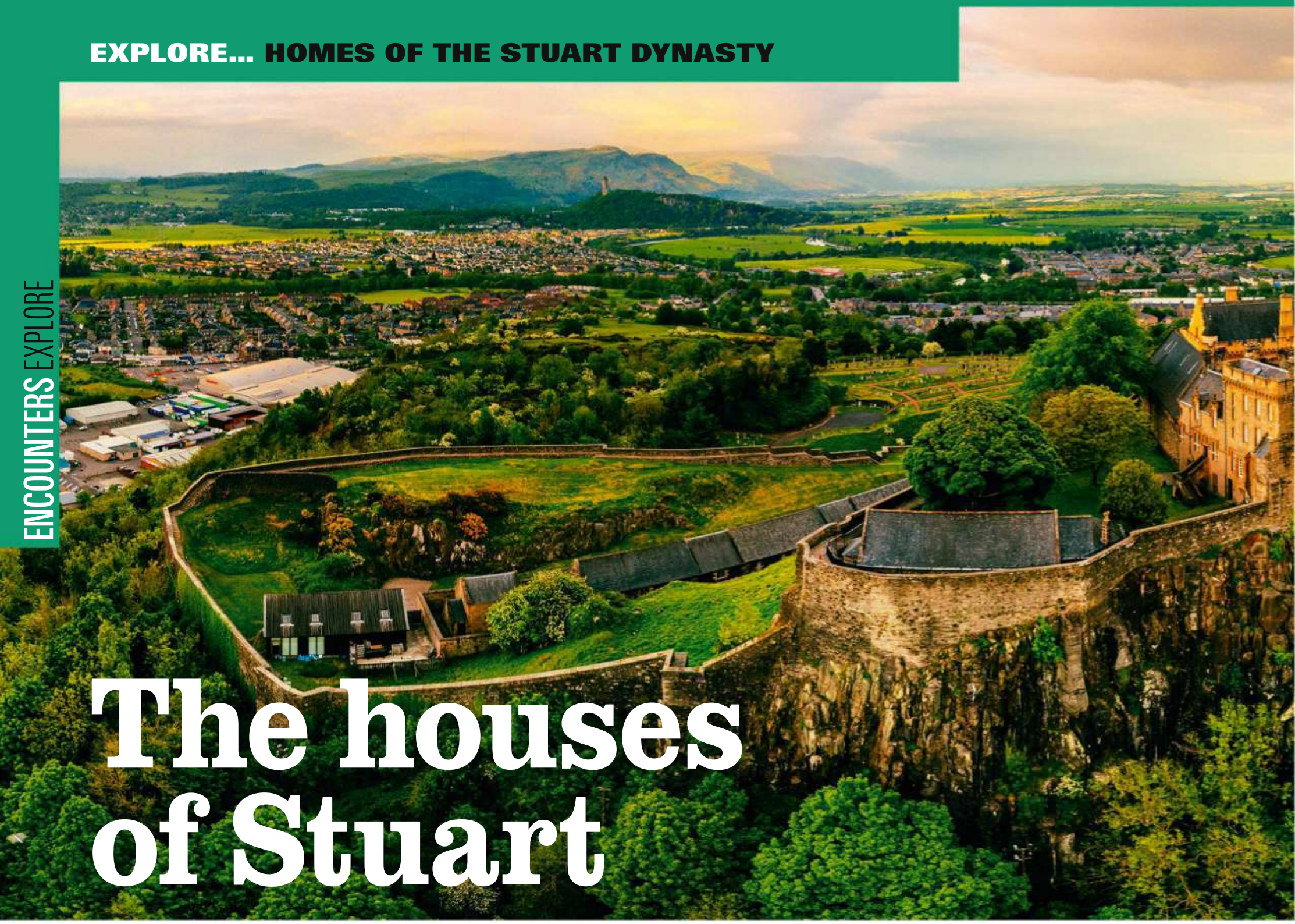
More happily, cricket and a 1990s-style, glowstick-assisted daytime bhangra rave also feature.

Without ignoring the difficulties faced by British south Asians, the tone here promises to be upbeat, as befits a show commissioned to coincide with the city hosting the Commonwealth Games. It's presented by BBC Asian Network's Noreen Khan and social historian Yasmin Khan.

Back in Time for Birmingham
BBC Two / Expected to air in late June

The Sharma family (pictured here) experience what life was like for British south Asian people in Birmingham in the fifties and beyond

BBC/IWM



The houses of Stuart

From Stirling Castle's forbidding fortifications to the high fashion of Kensington Palace, **SIMON THURLEY** takes us on a tour of seven buildings that played a critical role in the Stuart era

1 Citadel and cradle

Without Stirling Castle's impregnable walls, the first Stuart monarch to don the English crown might never have made it to adulthood

Today, James VI & I is remembered as the man who united two crowns in 1603, establishing the Stuarts as the ruling dynasty of England as well as Scotland – a royal house that endured till the death of his great-grand-daughter Queen Anne over a century later.

Yet when James ascended the Scottish throne in July 1567, aged just 13 months, the security of his new realm was threatened by rebellions and infighting. The infant king was placed under guardianship in Stirling Castle, perched impregnably on a volcanic crag far from the turbulent politics of Edinburgh.

Though the great gatehouse has been reduced since the 16th century, from the outside Stirling still looks forbidding – but inside the curtain walls lies a royal palace. Built in the 1530s and 40s, it has been restored to reflect the luxurious residence that was James's home for much of his first 12 years, providing a fascinating point of comparison with the royal palaces he inherited in England in 1603. Visitors can admire the richly decorated royal chambers, the banqueting hall, and the elegant chapel built by James in 1593–94.

At Stirling and Holyrood – which, when James first lived there in the late 16th century, stood just outside Edinburgh – he occupied only three or four rooms; in England, at Hampton Court, Whitehall and Greenwich, he was thrown into a maze of privy chambers containing perhaps a score of rooms. The compact plans of his Scottish houses such as Stirling always remained his preference.

When James returned to Stirling in 1617, after a gap of 14 years, his workmen rapidly patched it up for his arrival. His thoughts on re-entering the halls of his youth are not recorded, but the castle was never again a principal residence of the crown.

VISIT For more information, see **stirlingcastle.scot**

Stirling Castle, with its impregnable location on a rocky outcrop, provided a safe home for the infant Stuart king James VI

❷ Death and glory

The Banqueting House provided an extraordinary backdrop for some of the most turbulent episodes in British history

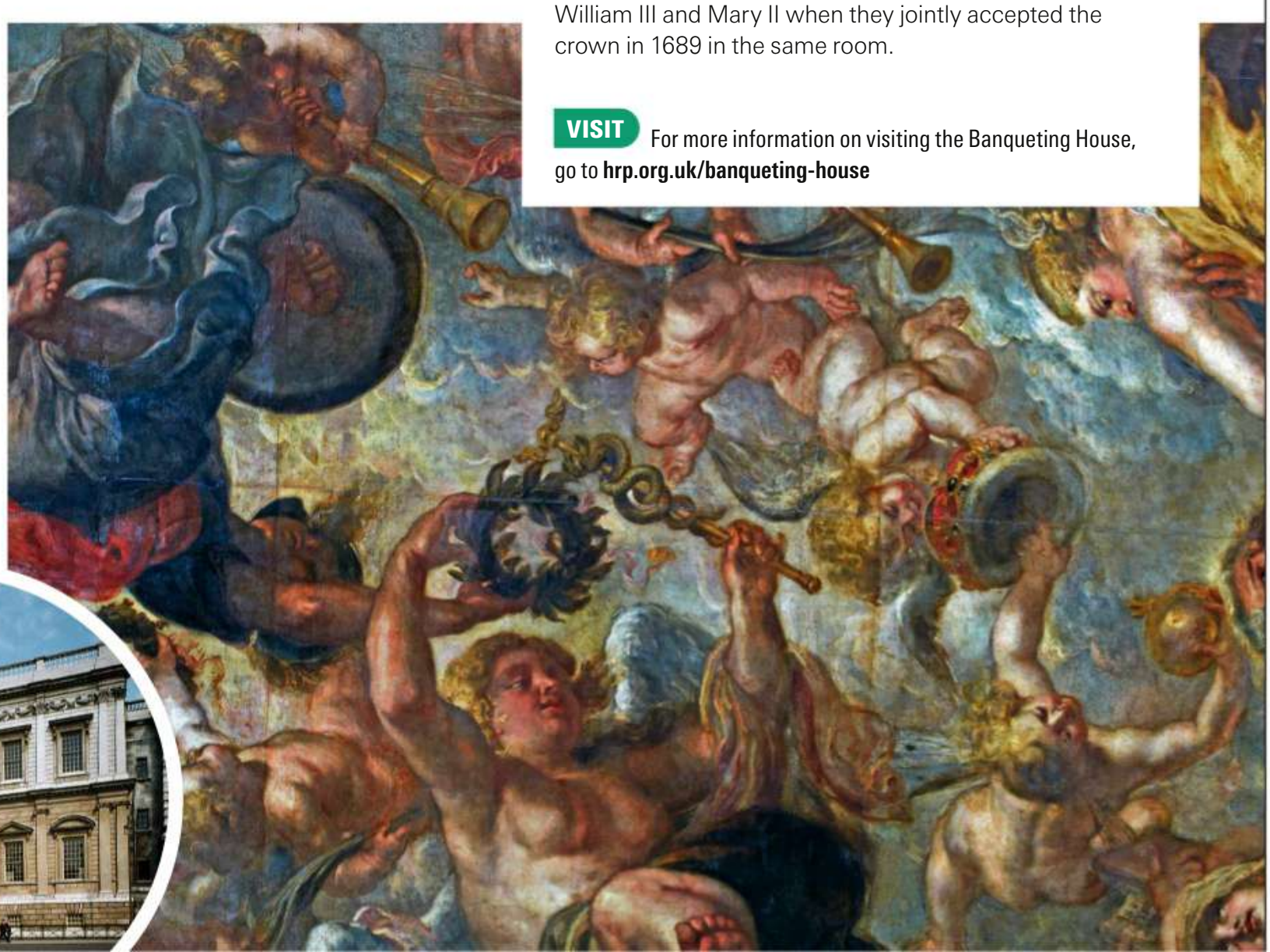
The Palace of Whitehall was the official residence for most of the English monarchs of the Stuart dynasty – and its sole surviving remnant, the Banqueting House, bore witness to the soaring highs and plunging lows of that tumultuous era.

Designed by royal architect Inigo Jones, the Banqueting House was commissioned in 1619 by James VI & I to be the venue for "festive occasions, for formal spectacles, and for the ceremonials of the British court" – particularly the extravagant masques the king and his queen so loved. It was deliberately fashioned to be majestic and regal, a formal composition in a formal architectural language. It stood out like a sore thumb among the low Tudor brick of Whitehall, and one connoisseur thought it "too fair" for the rest of the palace. Nonetheless, it functioned as a building of state for most of the Stuart era.

It almost didn't see out the century. In 1698, fire ripped through the palace but, on the orders of William III, special efforts were made to save Banqueting House – a potent symbol of the Stuart dynasty – from the flames. Its facade was re-faced over the following centuries, but its crowning glory can still be admired by visitors peering up inside.

In 1636, Charles I added Peter Paul Rubens' nine famous ceiling paintings, designed to glorify the achievements of that monarch's father, James VI & I. Just 13 years later, Charles was executed in front of the Banqueting House in a deliberate act of iconoclasm. That perhaps made it inevitable that when the dead king's son, Charles II, was restored to the throne in 1660, the Banqueting House would again be the backdrop. This point was not lost on William III and Mary II when they jointly accepted the crown in 1689 in the same room.

VISIT For more information on visiting the Banqueting House, go to **hrp.org.uk/banqueting-house**



BELOW The Banqueting House, built for James VI & I by Inigo Jones
RIGHT One of Peter Paul Rubens' magnificent ceiling paintings

DREAMSTIME/BRIDGEMAN/AKG/ GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE The Queen's House, Greenwich, started by Anne of Denmark, wife of James VI & I
RIGHT Queen Henrietta Maria, who continued the work
BELOW The original Tulip Stairs

3 A royal love nest

The Queen's House, Greenwich represents a dazzling celebration of a royal couple's mutual affection

"This luxurious private retreat for the king and queen was crammed with works of art celebrating their love for each other"

Charles I enjoys a reputation as a connoisseur of art and architecture, but the most important surviving building from his reign was constructed for his wife, Henrietta Maria. Indeed, both she and Anne of Denmark, wife of James VI & I, were much more important patrons of architecture than their husbands – a point demonstrated by the Queen's House in Greenwich.

Possibly intended originally as a sort of grandstand for watching the end of a deer hunt, the south aspect of the Queen's House faced the royal hunting park and contained a large balcony for spectators; the north side was in the royal gardens of Greenwich Palace. Bizarrely, running through the middle of the house was a main road over which the building had to vault.

Anne commissioned Inigo Jones to build the Queen's House, which remained incomplete at the time of her early death in 1619. Henrietta Maria continued the work, turning it into a luxurious private retreat for her and the king, crammed with works of contemporary art celebrating their affection for each other – what a tabloid newspaper might call a "love nest".

It was a pleasure pavilion described as the "House of Delight". Now set in manicured lawns, it originally fronted a large formal garden; the upper garden front was painted with colourful grotesques, while the queen's rooms had gilded iron balconies with views of the garden and, distantly, the City of London. Today, the interior, much remodelled over the centuries, gives little sense of what it was like in the 1630s but displays art from the collection of the National Maritime Museum.

VISIT For more information, see **rmg.co.uk/queens-house**

Elizabeth Castle, Jersey, briefly home in exile to the future king Charles II during the Civil War

4 Charles' island retreat

Elizabeth Castle provided a convenient bolt-hole for a prince on the run

In early 1646, when it became clear that the forces of the king had lost the Civil War between the royalists and parliamentarians, Charles I sent his son – the future Charles II – to the Isles of Scilly and then on to Jersey. There the prince set up court in St Helier at Elizabeth Castle – a spectacular location made more impressive still during the 14 hours a day when the rising tide transforms it into an island.

Just below the highest point is the governor's house which was hurriedly turned into a royal residence in 1646. On the ground floor was a hall and a parlour used by the royal guards; above was the prince's withdrawing rooms and bedroom, with fine views over the bay. In the lower ward stood the chapel, where the prince sat in his own tapestry-lined pew. More tapestry, plate and fine furniture transported aboard one of Charles's ships lent a suitably majestic luxury to the residence. When he was not out hunting, hawking or enjoying yachting in the bay, Charles dined (on gold plate) in public in his parlour, watched by spectators, and held receptions for the island's gentry.

The prince left Jersey in June 1646. When he returned three years later, after the execution of Charles I, he was proclaimed king. The governor's house was truly a royal palace, and he held court with all the pomp he could muster. In February 1650, he left for the last time – and the Channel Islands fell to parliament. Though much altered from its brief glory, the governor's house can still be visited; guided walks reveal the castle's wider story.

VISIT For more information on visiting Elizabeth Castle, go to **jerseyheritage.org**

5 The house of necessity

To escape the "pomp and gravity" of court, James VI & I retreated to a modest palace in Royston

James VI & I did not want to live in a building of state; in fact, he disliked Whitehall and avoided staying in London whenever possible. His preference was for a more informal life in the countryside where he could indulge his two favourite hobbies: hunting and writing. In the words of a Venetian visitor to his court, James favoured being "in retirement in remote places of which he is very fond, free and enjoying himself, without pomp or gravity, which are contrary to his nature".

For his rural retreat, the king settled on Royston, a market town in Hertfordshire that he had first visited as he travelled south from Scotland to be crowned in London. He initially set up house in a series of converted inns; then, in 1607, he built a modest but fashionable brick house with two large rooms. As well as providing a base for hunting and hawking, it was close enough to Cambridge to allow access to books and scholars to satisfy his intellectual curiosity.

James called this a "house of necessity" – in other words, one in which only people who were necessary could stay. It didn't have the facilities needed for the 600 or more people who inhabited Whitehall when he was in residence there. Instead, Royston gave James as much privacy as a 17th-century monarch could hope for.

Many of the former royal buildings still stand, including most of the king's own house (currently a private residence) – though James would be bemused to find that his former buttery is now a fish and chip shop.

VISIT For more information on visiting Royston, go to **roystontown.uk**

The "palace" built in Royston as an informal retreat for James VI & I

GETTY IMAGES/AKG/ALAMY

ABOVE The king's dining room at Windsor Castle, adorned with carvings by Grinling Gibbons
BELOW Charles II, in a contemporary portrait

6 The whiff of Restoration

Charles II's taste for the magnificent is writ large in his dining room at Windsor Castle

In the first years after the restoration of the monarchy, Charles II was not much of a builder; in fact, he spent a large proportion of the first five years of his reign at Whitehall. But in the 1670s, as anti-Catholic sentiment aimed at his brother James, Duke of York swelled, the king focused on building residences away from the turbulent and sometimes violent political atmosphere of London.

The most important of these was at Windsor Castle, where he commissioned the architect Hugh May to reconstruct the royal lodgings in the upper ward. Together with limewood carver Grinling Gibbons and mural painter Antonio Verrio, May created the most spectacular suite of royal interiors at Windsor since the reign of Edward III three centuries earlier. Indeed, one visitor described his magnificent throne room as "outshining the chariot of the blazing sun". These chambers asserted powerfully Charles II's God-given right to rule – a rebuke to his opponents, who wanted to exclude the Duke of York from the succession.

The king spent a great deal of time at the castle in the last years of his reign, relaxing with his mistress and hunting in Windsor Great Park. Tragically, most of his interiors were swept away by another ambitious royal builder, George IV, but the king's eating room – designed as a place for Charles to dine in sight of the court, listening to his musicians play their violins in custom-made alcoves – still retains its ceiling and carvings.

Today, Windsor Castle remains one of the few places where we can get a real whiff of the Restoration court.

"Charles II commissioned the most spectacular suite of royal interiors installed at Windsor Castle since the reign of Edward III"

VISIT For more information on visiting Windsor Castle, go to **rct.uk/visit/windsor-castle**

7 Fast fashion

Mary II's eye for style is evident at the hastily converted Kensington Palace

Kensington is one of the most unlikely palaces of the 17th century – essentially a product of the Glorious Revolution. After William III and Mary II took the throne in 1689, having long lived in relatively small, neat houses in the Low Countries, they took a dislike to the vast sprawl of Whitehall. Their reaction was much like that of James VI & I, who from 1603 set out to create smaller, more manageable residences than the vast Tudor powerhouses.

William and Mary bought the existing Kensington residence of the 2nd Earl of Nottingham, and commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to convert it into their main London base. This he did at great speed, taking advice from William's Dutch architects and designers who, after all, knew how the newly installed royal couple liked to live.

Before she died in 1694, Mary oversaw much of the work on the house while William was abroad fighting the French. Some of her rooms escaped 18th-century alteration; the finest of these is her gallery, designed as a private room for the display of her vast collection of blue-and-white Chinese export porcelain. Here, and at Hampton Court, Mary helped to shape the tastes of a generation of patrons and collectors – inspiring the "William and Mary" style of art and architecture. H

Simon Thurley is an architectural historian and former chief executive of English Heritage. His latest book, *Palaces of Revolution: Life, Death and Art at the Stuart Court* (William Collins), was out in paperback in May

VISIT For more information on visiting Kensington Palace, go to **hrp.org.uk/kensington-palace**

BELOW William III and Mary II, who oversaw work on her new palace
BOTTOM Kensington Palace, designed by Sir Christopher Wren

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Green dream
The Generalife gardens provide a calm retreat, with the exquisite Moorish architecture of the Alhambra as a backdrop

ALAMY

Spain's hilltop Moorish marvel

A graceful clash of cultures awaits in Granada. World renowned for the Alhambra palace and gardens, the city is also the resting place of the most famous Catholic monarchs, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, who united the Spanish kingdoms.

Most visitors come to lap up the sensational Moorish architecture and history, but Granada's delectable food scene, and its access to superb hiking in the summer and skiing in winter, make it worth more than a day trip. It's also close enough to the south Andalusian coast to be an unmissable excursion from beach resorts.

A visit to the Alhambra calls for some planning. Tickets must be bought in advance, and timeslots are allocated for the breathtaking 14th-century Palacios Nazaríes, its soaring arches and wall and ceiling decorations rich in ornate detail. Other enticing areas include halls, towers and the Generalife gardens, studded with calming pools. Consider visiting the Alhambra at night, when it is beautifully illuminated and – a key attraction in sweltering summer months – a little cooler.

The Alhambra, with its backdrop of verdant hills and the Sierra Nevada range, is supremely easy on the eye. Enjoy superb panoramas of the hilltop complex while exploring the Albayzín district just to the north. With its steep-sided streets, the city's archaeological museum and the Baños Árabes El Bañuelo – an atmospheric Moorish bathhouse – the Albayzín is a destination in itself. In the city centre you'll also find Granada's mighty cathedral and the Capilla Real (Royal Chapel) housing Isabella and Ferdinand's marble tombs alongside impressive artworks and other treasures from their reign.

You'll work up an appetite touring Granada. Most bars provide a free *tapa* snack with each drink – an extra enticement to join locals for an early evening *aperitivo*. H

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

- A short journey from Madrid is **Toledo**, its winding medieval streets awash with Moorish and Jewish influences and graced by a profusion of palaces and convents.
- For sensational Islamic architecture – and a symphony of noise and colour in the Djemaa El Fna plaza – head to **Marrakesh, Morocco**.

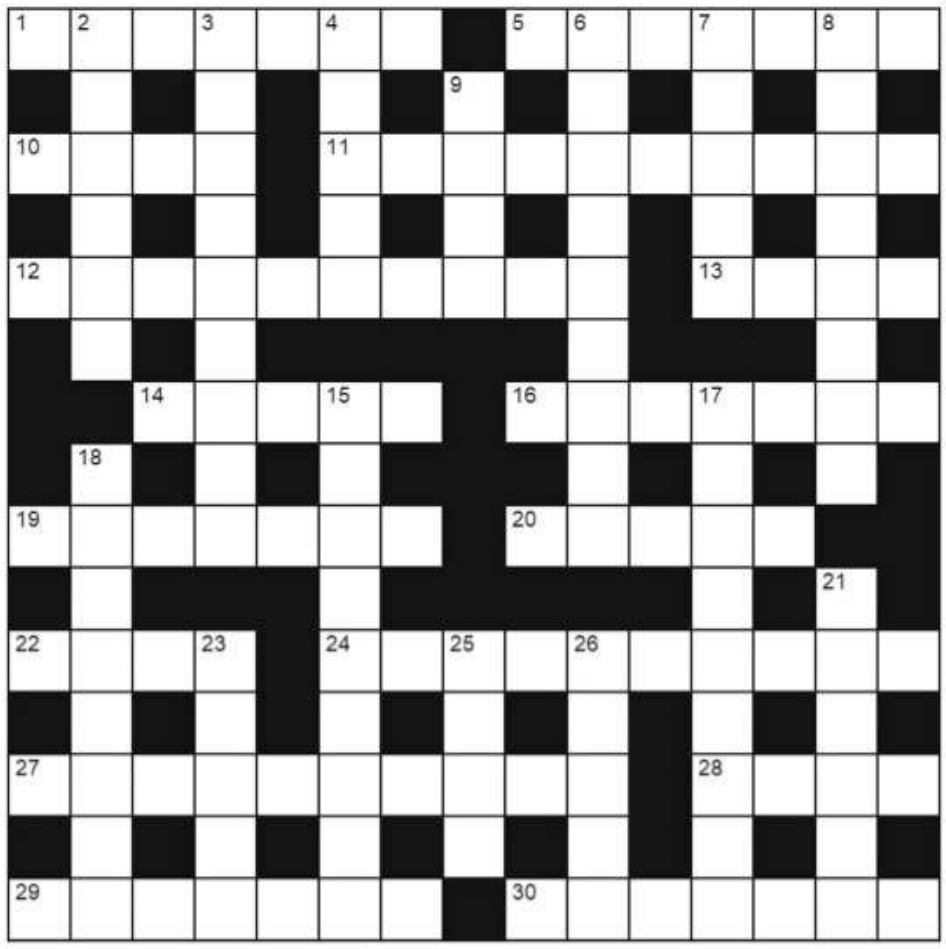
By **Tom Hall**, travel writer and co-author of *Lonely Planet's Guide to Train Travel in Europe* (2022)

PRIZE CROSSWORD

Heaven on Earth

By Emma J Wells

Historian Emma J Wells explores 16 of the world's most famous cathedrals in this fascinating book filled with sumptuous illustrations. From Gothic masterpiece Notre-Dame to the spires of Canterbury Cathedral, she reveals architectural secrets and the incredible stories of the people who built these spectacular monuments.



Across

1 The "battle of ____" in 1986 pitted UK printworkers against Rupert Murdoch, who had moved newspaper production to east London (7)
5 The Rouffignac Cave in France features depictions of this extinct land mammal (7)
10 Public school founded in 1440 by Henry VI (4)
11 John ____, national security advisor under US president Ronald Reagan, forced to resign as a result of his involvement in the Iran-Contra affair (10)
12 Lady ____ ____, executed (possibly unjustly) in 1685 for harbouring fugitives from the battle of Sedgemoor (5,5)
13/22 Early 18th-century thief thought to have inspired a novel by Daniel Defoe after he met her in Newgate Prison (4,4)
14 Together with Nelson Mandela and others, Oliver ____ founded the African National Congress Youth League (5)
16 ____ Knollys, noblewoman who angered Elizabeth I by secretly marrying Robert Dudley, the queen's favourite, in 1578 (7)
19 Town in central Italy, largely destroyed during the battle between German and Allied forces in the early months of 1944 (7)
20 *Ralph Roister Doister*, the first known English comedy drama, was written by Nicholas ____ in the mid-16th century (5)
22 See 13 across
24 The battle of Vitoria in June 1813, a victory for Wellington, effectively ended the _____ War (10)
27 Major Italian artist of the late Renaissance era, nicknamed "Il Furioso" (10)
28 ____ of Saint-Quentin, author of a history of the first Dukes of Normandy based on oral rather than written sources (4)
29 Parliament of Israel, early sittings of which convened in Tel Aviv in 1949 (7)
30 Egyptian town, now called Rashid, near which a stone was found in 1799 that proved to be the key to deciphering hieroglyphics (7)

What was the gang member-turned-politician Phoolan Devi popularly known as? *(21 down)*

Down

2 Fifth-century king of the Huns, known as the "Scourge of God" (6)
3 Series of conflicts culminating in the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC (5,4)
4 Landlocked Asian country ruled for many centuries by the Malla dynasty (5)
6 Grand house in Essex built by Thomas Howard from around 1605 (6,3)
7 Sir Hiram ____, inventor in 1884 of the world's first effective fully automatic machine gun, named after him (5)
8 ___ ____, a wooden support historically used in beheadings (3,5)
9 The controversial tenure of the 12th pope to bear this name encompassed the Second World War (4)
15 This French imperial dynasty was brought to an end during the Franco-Prussian War after the battle of Sedan (1870) (9)
17 Dorset village that gave its name to six "martyred" 19th-century farm labourers (9)
18 Man from what's now Serbia, chosen as Roman co-emperor by Diocletian for his military expertise (8)
21 Phoolan Devi, known as the "____ Queen", was leader of a gang of dacoits and later became an Indian MP (6)
23 Germanic people whose two branches played a large role in the fall of the Roman empire (5)
25 Alliance set up in 1949 towards the end of the Soviet blockade of Berlin (4)
26 Joshua ____, founder in 1961 of ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union), becoming vice-president of that country in 1990 (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, July 2022 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***july2022@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **6 July 2022**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the September 2022 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *https://policies.immediate.co.uk/privacy* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ❑ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our May 2022 crossword

Across 1 Rosebery 5 Balboa 10/23 Tracy Borman 11 Guy Gibson 12 Endurance 13 Trek 15 Felton 17 Martello 19 Rosselli 21 Sèvres 24 Alma 25 Mao Zedong 28 Presidium 29 Neave 30 Amiens 31 Anderton
Down 1 Rutherford 2 Scandal 3 Boyar 4 Regent 6 Aristotle 7 Boswell 8 Ainu 9 Mycenae 14 Goose Green 16 Operation 18 Alamein 20 Salieri 22 Riot Act 26 Ernie 27 MPLA

Four winners of *España*

A Wilson, Greater Manchester; N Lancaster, Oxfordshire; P O'Conor, Surrey; G Billing, Wiltshire

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When it comes to the Vikings, the images that dominate today are all along a similar theme: raider, plunderer, barbarian. These tropes are entrenched in pop culture, but they belie the depth and diversity of Viking life. Dr Christian Cooijmans argues that we need to think differently.

historyextra.com/viking-hostility

The Ladies of Llangollen

Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby dreamed of an unconventional life: one where two women, deeply in love, could live together. It was a dream that took them to north Wales and saw them rub shoulders with the personalities of the day.

historyextra.com/ladies-llangollen

The downfall of Maximilian I of Mexico

In the early 1860s a plot was hatched to have a European archduke assume the throne in Mexico. Maximilian was promised that his rule would have popular support and imperial resource, but instead he met a bloody end.

historyextra.com/maximilian-mexico

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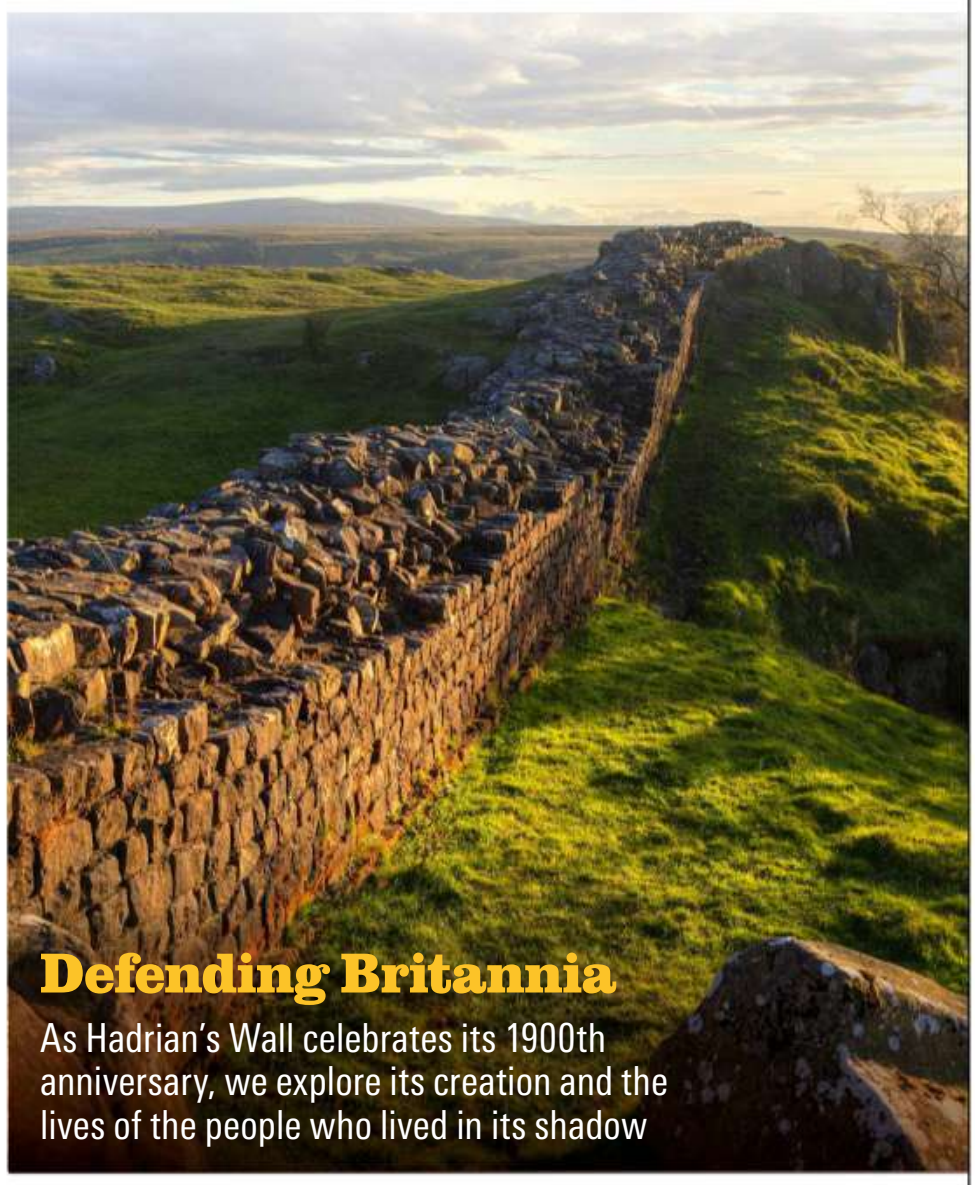
August issue on sale 7 July 2022



Defending Britannia

As Hadrian's Wall celebrates its 1900th anniversary, we explore its creation and the lives of the people who lived in its shadow

Mongol wars

Nicholas Morton explains how the seemingly unstoppable Mongol forces were halted

Rival queens

Estelle Paranque compares the reigns of Elizabeth I and Catherine de Medici

Prices rising

As the cost of living increases in Britain, Phil Tinline looks back at earlier inflationary eras

MY HISTORY HERO

Chef, restaurateur and author ***Nisha Katona*** *chooses*

Samuel Pepys

1633–1703

A portrait of Samuel Pepys, dated 1666. "It is said he was the first to bring the Great Fire to the notice of the king, and to suggest pulling down houses to create firebreaks," says Nisha Katona

IN PROFILE

English naval administrator Samuel Pepys is best known for the diary he kept over nearly a decade from 1660, in which he recorded in extraordinary detail notable events of the day along with his own personal routines. Born in London, he rose to become chief secretary of the Admiralty, and his reforms helped bring a new professionalism to the Royal Navy.

Nisha Katona is the founder of Mowgli Street Food restaurants *(mowglistreetfood.com)*. Her latest book is *30 Minute Mowgli* (Nourish Books)

When did you first hear about Pepys? I have always been a history geek. I became obsessed with epic historical events like the Great Fire of London and the bubonic plague, so when I chanced upon Pepys' diaries I was hooked – they gave me a ringside view of events. I love anything that transports one back to the distant past and reveals the detail of how life looked and smelled in days gone by.

What kind of man was he? He was narcissistic enough to almost invent the diary form and to understand the importance of his chronicles, bequeathing them to Magdalene College, Cambridge for posterity. Pepys was fascinated by what was going on all around him, and wrote vividly about everyday life, from his breakfasts to his bowel movements.

What made him a hero? First, his diligence in writing his diary every day. Second, the astonishing level of detail he included about 17th-century London life. For instance, he noted his sadness at the loss of shops forced to close during the plague, auguring the post-pandemic high street today. To me, the daily energy required to record this level of detail is heroic.

What was his finest hour? It is said he was the first to bring the Great Fire of London to the notice of the king, and to suggest pulling down houses to create firebreaks. But I think Pepys himself felt that his finest hour was a speech he made at the bar in the House of Commons, in defence of the Navy Board, on 5 March 1668. So virtuosic was he that many proclaimed him to be the best speaker they had ever heard – and, as his diary entry makes clear, he revelled in the adoration.

Is there anything that you don't particularly admire about him? He treated his wife pretty shabbily, and his philandering and treatment of women were base and unforgivable.

Can you see any parallels between his life and your own? Pepys had a fascination with the detail of life. He was greedy, gregarious and obsessively passionate, like me. We both came from humble backgrounds and worked like fiends to achieve success. And he was a foodie, too. His diary reveals that oysters were the pub snack of choice in his day, and that tables were laden with lamprey, carp and myriad fresh fish.

What would you ask Pepys if you could meet him? His diary has told me everything I could possibly want to know about him and London in the 1660s. If I could pluck up the courage, I would just ask him for an autograph and a selfie. H

Nisha Katona was talking to York Membery

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BBC RADIO 4

> "Pepys was fascinated by what was going on all around him, and wrote in vivid detail about everyday life, from breakfasts to bowel movements"

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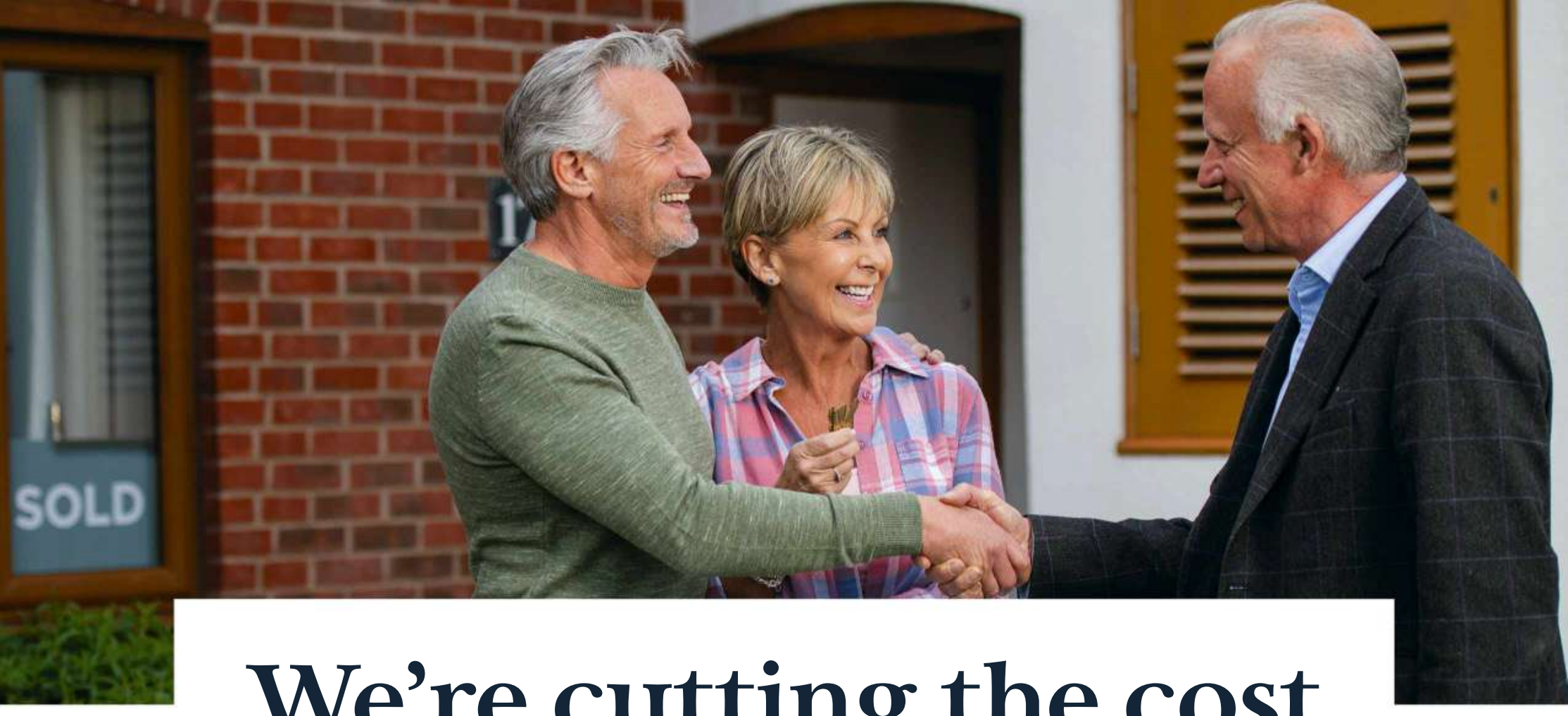

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